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CONTENTS

2 June 1992

NEAR EAST

EGYPT

Privatization Still Not Private Enterprise	1
State Retains Control [AL-AHRAM WEEKLY 23-29 Apr]	1
Public vs Private Finance [AL-AHRAM WEEKLY 23-29 Apr]	1
Nasirist Party Politics, Problems Reviewed	2
Chairman Interviewed [ROSE AL-YUSUF 27 Apr]	2
Factional Infighting [ROSE AL-YUSUF 27 Apr]	4
Members in Parliament [ROSE AL-YUSUF 27 Apr]	6
Sign of Democracy [ROSE AL-YUSUF 27 Apr]	6

IRAQ

Discussion of Food Prices, Local Markets [BABIL 19, 20, 21 Apr]	7
---	---

ISRAEL

IG Report on Sharon's Housing Activities	16
Sharon Responds to Report [YEDI'OT AHARONOT 1 May]	16
Former Housing Director General [YEDI'OT AHARONOT 1 May]	17
Syria 'Hoodwinking' U.S. on Jewish Emigration [HA'ARETZ 4 May]	20

LEBANON

Minister Nabih Birri on Amal, National Issues [AL-SHIRA' 23, 30 Mar]	21
Dr. 'Ali al-Hasan Rebuttal to Birri [AL-SHIRA' 30 Mar]	40
Listing, Confessional Makeup of Category I Jobs [AL-SAFIR 10 Apr]	42
Report on Status of Displaced Persons, Statistics [AL-SAFIR 11 Apr]	51

SUDAN

State Still Regulates Bread, Fuel Prices [London AL-HAYAH 15 Apr]	57
Economy Affected by War Efforts in South [London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT 20 Apr]	58

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Bank Releases 1991 Census, Financial Estimates [AL-BAYAN 10 Apr]	59
Competitive Prices Alleged To Improve Position [AL-BAYAN 16 Apr]	60
Containers in Port Zayid Increase in 1st Quarter [AL-BAYAN 20 Apr]	60

REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

Heavy Water Use Threatens Water Table [AL-THAWRA 6 Apr]	61
Cabinet Condemns Terrorism After Embassy Attack [London AL-HAYAH 23 Apr]	62
Sons of Yemen Party To Publish Paper [London AL-HAYAH 27 Apr]	62

SOUTH ASIA

NEPAL

Prospect of Economic Growth Seen Bleak [THE RISING NEPAL 7 May]	63
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PAKISTAN

Minister Denies Interest in Muslim Bloc, Bomb	[London AL-MAJALLAH 8 Apr]	64
Journalist Regrets Closure of MORNING NEWS	[DAWN 27 Apr]	65
Analyst Examines Nation's Adjustment to Democracy	[DAWN 1 May]	67
New Political Party Founded by Leftists	[DAWN 1 May]	70
PPP Alleges Party Workers Raped at Poll Booths	[DAWN 1 May]	70
Analyst Calls For Division of Punjab Province	[DAWN 4 May]	71

EGYPT

Privatization Still Not Private Enterprise

State Retains Control

92AF0815A Cairo AL-AHRAM WEEKLY in English
23-29 Apr 92 p 4

[Article by Raafat Soliman]

[Text] The government, with the help of foreign and Egyptian consultant offices, is currently in the process of making updated and accurate evaluations of public-sector enterprises to facilitate the reform and restructuring of these entities.

However, experts expect that the second stage of the reform process—the actual privatisation of the companies through sale of their shares to private individuals and companies—will be the most challenging. They warn that without a proper study of the market, and of the prospective buyers and their needs, the programme could be doomed to failure.

The question which imposes itself at this stage is with the government continuing de facto control over the companies, will it find buyers for the shares, and what are the prospects for the success of the selling process?

According to Stock Market Chairman Mohamed Hamed, the root of the problems lies in the nature of the shares which will be put up for sale.

"What is being marketed are shares of stockholding companies, affiliated to holding companies of which the government retains control with a minimum of 51 per cent of the holding company's shares," he said.

He added that the government is also in control of the boards of directors of the affiliated companies. Half of the members of these boards, according to the new Public Sector Law, should be company workers—that is, government employees—while the other half is chosen by the board of directors of the holding company.

The duties of the managements of the holding companies are intermingled and the final power is in the hands of the minister responsible for the public sector, Hamed said.

Hamed explained that when the private sector buys 49 per cent of the shares of the affiliated companies, it will not have the power to determine company policies.

"This could cause the private sector to refrain from buying the shares of these companies, for fear that it will not bring in adequate returns when compared to other investment alternatives in the market," he said.

Hamed outlines a number of suggestions which could help promote the sale of the shares within the limits of the 49 per cent share of the private sector. He suggests that the government negotiate with large investors to buy

the shares which will be introduced to the market. In this case, the private investors will probably insist that they have a decisive role in the company management, production, distribution and profit-sharing policies.

Hamed also suggests that selling the shares to the public by public auction could help attract hundreds of investors. However, the holding company will have to provide extensive information to private investors who could be interested in buying, and in this case, the government should start by offering the shares of successful profit making companies to encourage small investors.

Meanwhile, companies which are facing financial troubles could discourage investors and hinder the selling process, said Hamed. Large investment companies could be formed to buy the shares cheaply with the aim of selling them at a later stage after the companies' problems have been overcome.

Banks could also play a role in the process, Hamed said, by buying shares of successful companies at promotional prices. The banks would later be able to re-sell the shares to the public.

Economists suggest that the two-year-old experience of selling enterprises owned by local governments should provide guidelines for the sale of other public enterprises.

Economist Sayyed Eissa says that exaggeration in pricing small enterprises owned by governorates frightened away prospective buyers as did property disputes over the land on which the projects were built. The debt burdens which impeded the performance of these enterprises, in addition to the lack of accurate feasibility studies were also factors which have been hindering the sale of these enterprises to date, Eissa said.

Eissa is pessimistic about the ability of the private sector to absorb the projects which the government is planning to sell. He said if 40 per cent of the Egyptian public sector is sold during this decade, this means that about LE 59.7 billion-worth of stock will be sold. At the same time, the private sector is charged with implementing 60 per cent of the investments in the 1992-1997 five year plan which represents an additional burden for the private sector; a fact which has to be taken into consideration while planning to sell public-sector stock.

Public vs Private Finance

92AF0815B Cairo AL-AHRAM WEEKLY in English
23-29 Apr 92 p 4

[Article by Rafat Amin]

[Text] A recent indication that the government's public sector privatisation plans are soon to be put into effect came from the private sector rather than from the government itself. Currently under establishment is the first private sector holding company aimed at buying and administering the shares of privatised public sector concerns.

The holding company is being set up by a group of investors with an initial paid capital of LE100 million and an estimated capital of LE200 million. The object of the company is to buy, become a shareholding partner or leaseholder of public sector companies.

The buying of the public sector by the private will be no simple matter however, according to Amhed Arafa, himself a private businessman who heads the Investors' Division of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry [FCCI]. It is risky, requires huge capital outlays and considerable experience and expertise by the private buyers in the public sector businesses into which they are buying, he said.

Arafa, who is also a member of the recently established public sector Holding Company for Spinning and Weaving, gave his understanding of governmental privatisation plans in the following: The government will first sell off its shares in joint-venture companies, he explained, followed by the sale in the form of shares of successful profit-making companies.

He is not hopeful about the private sector's ability to buy the massive assets of the public sector, with assets in excess of LE43 billion. In Arafa's view, the suggestion that public sector banks should finance the buying of the public sector "defeats the whole purpose of the enterprise," which is to transfer ownership from public to private hands.

The Vice-Chairman of the Investors' Division of the FCCI, Mohamed Abu-Elainein seemed more optimistic however. He felt that the trend to establish private sector holding companies made up of businessmen, manufacturers and banks provides a serious attempt to create sufficiently large economic groupings capable of buying into the public sector.

Such private sector groupings would keep a diversified stock portfolio, to protect them against market fluctuations, he said. He suggested that one major activity would be to buy loss-making public sector companies, restructure them and put them on the right track, and finally, to put them up for sale as joint-ventures.

Nasirist Party Politics, Problems Reviewed

Chairman Interviewed

92AF0734A Cairo ROSE AL-YUSUF in Arabic
27 April 92 pp 6,7

[Interview with Diya'-al-Din Dawud, leader of the Democratic Nasirist Party, by Hamdi Rizq: "Diya'-al-Din Dawud to ROSE AL-YUSUF: 'Nasirists Demand Party For Muslim Brotherhood; We Are Not Trying To Destroy NPUG, Dialogue With NDP Essential; No Nasirist Shall Enter Party Unless He Removes Attire of Past Years'"

[Text] "It is true that people throughout the world have smashed the statues of Lenin and Marx, but they did not smash those of 'Abd-al-Nasir, or rip up his pictures."

This is what Diya'-al-Din Dawud, leader of the [Arab] Nasirist Democratic Party [ANDP], said when we told him that his party was 15 years late in appearing.

So, I followed up with another question: "Where, after this long absence, is the ANDP located on Egypt's political map?"

Dawud responded: "It is the party of the broad masses that benefited from the revolution of 23 July 1952. They are now trying to steal away the gains they made. It is the party of the peasant who benefitted from land reformation, the worker who became a partner in production, and the student who enjoys free education."

[Rizq] Mr. Diya', perhaps you have noticed that these ideas are the same as those of the National [Democratic] Party [NDP] which views itself as the heir to the revolution.

[Dawud] What does the word heir mean? Is it sitting at headquarters and enjoying walls that once were the property of this or that [group]? We support the idea of inheriting principles and sticking to them. Here, we have to measure the NDP's inheritance of the Nasirist July revolution along the social and Arab dimensions. The challenge is in our commitment to defending these two dimensions.

[Rizq] So there will be no dialogue between you and the NDP as long as there is a disagreement over the legacy?

[Dawud] Dialogue is needed, and it exists. This is what national issues demand, in one form or another. Indeed, the opposition, which called for a boycott of the elections, is conducting a dialogue on the pages of its newspapers on all issues without even realizing it.

This is why I reject the notion of a boycott. I think the opposition now regrets having boycotted the 1990 elections. We shall not do something we will regret.

[Rizq] Is the new party large enough for all the Nasirists?

[Dawud] All the Nasirists in Egypt are determined that a single Nasirist organization should appear that encompasses all of them. All the previous attempts were on behalf of the Nasirists. Had someone succeeded, his party would have been for all Nasirists.

As for the party I proposed, this was an assignment from Nasirists of all varieties, including the Nasirist Arab Socialist Party, where I was a member of the General Secretariat. Hence, it is an extension of all these wills as a whole, and the result is to the benefit of all of us. The arena is large enough for everyone.

[Rizq] Mr. Diya', whom do you mean by "everyone?" Who are the Nasirists?

[Dawud] A Nasirist is anyone who believes in Nasirist policies and guiding principles. Foremost of these is the National Action Charter, two points in particular:

First, the social dimension, which means that we be concerned about the poor classes in any political, economic, or social measure.

Second, the Arab dimension, by which we understand the Arab-Israeli conflict, which we view not as an issue of boundaries or a piece of territory, but as the presence of Israel on Arab land, on even one inch of it. This is the real danger. The recovery of the Sinai, or even the return of the Golan [Heights], does not mean that the conflict is over.

[Rizq] These are ideas that many believe in, especially the Nasirists in all the parties. What is their position now?

[Dawud] It would be hasty to make an absolute response to this question, because this is the right of the Founders' Association, which will convene next week. In principle, the ANDP is open to everyone, regardless of his party situation, as long as he believes in its principles. Joining us will be a matter of choice, not recruitment. If, during a certain period, we allowed Nasirists to exercise party activity from windows, now the door is open to them. They no longer need such narrow windows, but first they have to remove the garb of the last phase.

Mass Withdrawal

[Rizq] Does this appeal mean a mass withdrawal of Nasirist cadres from the [National Progressive Unionist] Grouping Party [NPUG], and its destruction from within, if not its fall?

[Dawud] We do not want to pull the carpet out from under anyone or destroy a party already on the scene. The NPUG arose during a special historical phase, and it played a major role on behalf of the Nasirists. It gave them a lot of room for action, and this is a role we do not deny.

So, we are determined that the NPUG continue and remain strong. Its continuance will also strengthen the ANDP.

[Rizq] Are you afraid of bringing all these Nasirist groups together in a single party? What disagreements might this bring about?

[Dawud] If so, then we have not absorbed the democratic concept of what happens inside parties. Reality requires a variety of thoughts, methodologies, degrees of enthusiasm, and so on. Any party that has no language for dialogue dies. Disagreements are a sign of health and democracy within a party. So, the ANDP, in particular, is not offended by disagreements, as long as they take a democratic form and their objective is to move the march forward, not halt it.

When such disagreements turn into factions that abandon the party line, however, and give the appearance of duplicity, this is where the danger to the party arises. The matter has to be corrected right then.

[Rizq] What if the disagreement turns into a struggle for management or leadership of the party, as some are reporting?

[Dawud] There will be no duplicity. We will not allow any factions outside the party framework. All of these issues will be firmly decided by the Founders' Association.

Religious Party

[Rizq] Mr. Diya', having become legitimate, how will you view the Muslim Brotherhood's demand to create their own party?

[Dawud] There is a plank in our party's platform that calls for repealing the current [Political] Parties Law. We are striving for this, and to open the door to all political forces, including the Muslim Brotherhood, to form their parties. I believe that such a measure is in the interest of the political movement and cleansing it of the problems of violence and political assassinations associated with the previous period.

As long as these forces operate within the existing political framework, it would be wrong to ban them from political action. We support any force forming a party, and that the common man be the sole determinant as to whether a party continues or not.

[Rizq] In your responses to ROSE AL-YUSUF, you spoke of violence and political assassinations. Here I must remind you of the accusations that it was 'Abd-al-Nasir's detentions that caused the extremism.

[Dawud] Every revolution has victims. When the train rolls, many in its path are run over. This is understood during the onset of the revolution phase, which is over. We must not live as prisoners of the past, otherwise we will remain unknown.

We, as a Nasirist Party, are now out of power. The Islamists are out of power; in fact, they are illegal. Neither of us any longer threatens the other so there is absolutely no justification for maintaining the idea of retaliation between the two parties.

I believe that exploitation of this argument is simply a way of living off of politics. It turns its proponents into supplicants who use their deformities to beg. There is no reason we should profit from people's sympathy for what happened yesterday.

Rock Candy

[Rizq] Do you see any other beggars among the parties, besides these?

[Dawud] The existing parties are closer to the al-Salafiyah group [an Islamic reform movement in Egypt,

founded by Muhammad 'Abduh, also known as the Salafis) in their ideas, and their performance is influenced by it. They are [like] the party man that prevailed before the revolution.

Party performance under [Arab] Socialist Union conditions, and what was appropriate during single-party rule is not suitable at the stage of pluralism. For this reason, all the parties are called upon to invent new modalities of political practice that exclude those from before or after the revolution.

[Rizq] From this perspective, how do you view the Wafd Party?

[Dawud] We totally and fundamentally disagree with this party. They are trying to transform society to capitalism, which, in our view, ignores the social and Arab dimension. We do not like that, and we can never agree to it.

[Rizq] And the [Socialist] Labor Party [SLP]?

[Dawud] This is not a party. It is a union of political forces with widely differing ideas. It contains progressive forces, which I might agree with on the Arab and social dimension; and others which are capitalist and do not agree with me and with whom I will not deal. So when I deal with the SLP, it will be as a union, not as a party.

[Rizq] The Liberals?

[Dawud] [They are] like all the rest of the parties that resemble what is known as the theory of making rock candy. The party chairman is the entire party. He is like a stick placed in sugar water around which sugar crystallizes. When he falls, the party falls.

Factional Infighting

92AF0734B Cairo ROSE AL-YUSUF in Arabic
27 April 92 pp 8-10

[Article by Karam Jabr: "War of Attrition in New Nasirist Party"]

[Text] There are two teams tugging at the rope of the new Nasirist party: the young generation that appeared for the first time in 1976 when [President Anwar] al-Sadat said to one of them at a conference of university students: "Tell me, my son, what does Nasirism mean?," and the old guard, whose most prominent figures are Diya'-al-Din Dawud, General Muhammad Fawzi, 'Abd-al-Muhsin 'Abu-al-Nur, Sami Sharaf, and Farid 'Abd-al-Karim, all of whom tasted the bitterness of Sadat's imprisonment.

The question is: Who is going to win the tug of war?

With surprising timing, a decision of the Supreme Administrative Court was issued last Sunday licensing the establishment of the Arab Nasirist Democratic Party [ANDP] in a lawsuit filed by Diya'-al-Din Dawud representing the founders. No one—not even the most optimistic—expected the court to issue a decision

pulling the carpet out from under the ruling National [Democratic] Party [NDP], which continues to insist that it is "the party of the July revolution and its principles, and the legitimate heir to its accomplishments." As a Nasirist source put it, before the decision was issued, "No matter how much confidence we have in the neutrality and independence of the judiciary, approaching this area is like playing with fire."

This expectation may explain the reason for the shock in Nasirist quarters. In the few days before the decision was made, the flow of events within the Nasirist movement had been moving in two inseparable directions.

The first is the insistence of the young generation on the ouster of Farid 'Abd-al-Karim, who represents the founders of the Nasirist Arab Socialist Party [NASP] (under formation).

[The second is] the opening of channels of communication and a broad-scale dialogue with the political Islamic tendency to coordinate a stand against the government, which had banned both from gathering under the banner of party legitimacy.

War of Attrition

Before raising the question of why [they want] the ouster of Farid 'Abd-al-Karim, it would be useful to take a step back and look at the map of Nasirist trends prior to this latest development, and review their strengths and weaknesses.

1. NASP founder Farid 'Abd-al-Karim, whose objective was to be the vessel for all the Nasirist trends, with the proviso that the NASP remain "under formation" only, and not be submitted to the Parties' Committee or the Parties' Court. The reason is that the law allows parties under formation to exercise activity such as symposia, gatherings, and meetings, but these are banned once the party's application has been submitted to the Parties' Commission.

It was in the context of this concept that Diya'-al-Din Dawud was permitted to present his party from within the party of Farid 'Abd-al-Karim, while preserving the [latter's] license under the law to practice a limited amount of political activity. Thus, the NASP became the source from which branches could extend, one of which might be successful in obtaining a decision on forming a political party, which is what actually happened in the case of the ANDP.

2. The young generation's trend formed a tremendous driving force within Farid 'Abd-al-Karim's party. They were active in conferences, workers' federations, and with student supporters. As one young leader, Hama-dayn Sabahi, put it, "They kept blood flowing in the veins." They carried posters, chanted in conferences, and marched in demonstrations. They developed a strong sense that they were the first and last line of the Nasirist movement.

3. There are the comrades of 'Abd-al-Nasir who were his contemporaries, close to him, and worked with him, all of whom are in their sixties or seventies. The least time any of them spent in jail was 10 years, in what was called the May 15th Case. They gradually began to appear in public life again after their release, and most joined the party of Farid 'Abd-al-Karim, at least to provide moral support.

The difficult equation became how to reconcile the impulsiveness of youth with the wisdom of the elders.

According to Hamadayn Sabahi, the youth's view of the older group was, "They are forerunners who aided 'Abd-al-Nasir in his difficult missions, bore the confrontation with Sadat, and paid the price. But the coming stage is difficult and arduous. It needs new thinking and a generation able to penetrate the masses, otherwise we will be like all the other parties, just a newspaper and names grappling for imaginary positions.

[Jabr] Does this mean that you are telling them, "'God thanks you for your effort'; get out of the way!"?

[Sabahi] We hope that each of them will give the utmost intellectual effort he can on behalf of this party and its objectives, but we do not want anyone to charge that the "generals" of the old guard are back again. The role is much more difficult than they can undertake. Legitimacy, the laws of which we have not yet established, involves delicate balances. The first one is that we side with people's problems and expectations; the second is that engagement in a clash with the forces controlling the nation is considered part of the Nasirist venture. All governments are considered stumbling blocks in the way of this venture.

Only a few hours before the decision of the Supreme Administrative Court was issued, every scenario within the Nasirist movement warned of a clash between the young generation and Farid 'Abd-al-Karim. The will of the youth was unified on his ouster and the search for a replacement. From the perspective of the young generation, the most important reasons were the following:

1. Although Farid 'Abd-al-Karim might make a good "imam" preaching to the masses and arousing their enthusiasm, he failed in every executive task inside the "mother" party. It was about to dissolve, leaving the Nasirist movement to be absorbed into the other parties.

2. There was the appearance of a fit of deranged piety in Farid 'Abd-al-Karim, exemplified by his becoming more a religious "preacher" than a "trustee" of the Nasirist movement.

The difficult problem was: Who would the replacement be?

Eyes were cast in the direction of General Muhammad Fawzi (age 77), former defense minister and a comrade of 'Abd-al-Nasir, who rebuilt the armed forces, engaged in the war of attrition, and was tossed in jail by Sadat. He

entered jail with his head held high, as the first commander general of the Egyptian Armed Forces to stand behind bars in his military uniform decorated with ribbons and medals. General Fawzi seems to have done a quick "situation assessment," and realized that the matter that threatened an explosion within the Nasirist movement needed "defusing." Some sources say that he managed the conflict in the same way he managed the war of attrition, until he was able to close all the gaps. His philosophy was to close every door leading to conflict and to create a group leadership to study all problems on site and to offer appropriate solutions without anyone taken solitary decisions.

But strangely, the young generation that attacked Farid 'Abd-al-Karim for seeking favor with the political Islamic tendency, did the very same thing. They fell into a controversy with Islamic elements, more like a dialogue of the deaf, claiming that they agreed with them on certain objectives. I asked Hamadayn al-Sabahi about the real reasons behind this "flirtation."

He said: "I believe the political movement of the Islamic tendency has reached a stage of maturity and has a clear presence on the political scene. Thus, it is difficult for the masses to remain a prisoner of the imaginary struggle between Islam and Nasirism. Our duty is to show that the two are not contradictory.

Party Chairman

Diya'-al-Din Dawud (age 65) is the sole legal representative of the Nasirist party. Under the law he is its official spokesman and responsible for preparing its organizational structure and bylaws.

His view is that he represents the Nasirist tendency through a mutual understanding with most of its offshoots. In this, he pursues a policy of "patience" to dissolve disputes. He always says, "There may be disagreements concerning methods or action, but these are a sign of party vitality and a characteristic of life, not the opposite." Thus, he is trying to make his party the legitimate vessel of all the Nasirists. "We welcome whoever wants to enter the party; someone who wants to remain in another party, we also welcome, as part of the broad Nasirist tendency that is on the move everywhere."

I asked Gen. Muhammad Fawzi: "What is your comment on speculation suggesting your name as chairman of the ANDP?"

He replied, "The decision went to Diya'-al-Din Dawud, and under the law, it is his right, together with the Founding Committee recommended by him, to build the party and its organizational formations. Everything resulting from the issuance of the decision is entrusted to him and his colleagues, the founding members. He is the only one who can answer the questions and inquiries that have been raised, but I emphasize that all of us are assisting him. No Nasirist will delay offering everything he can to build a strong populist party on a par with the

accomplishments of the great July 23 revolution and its leader, Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir."

When I addressed the same question to Farid 'Abd-al-Karim (age 63), he said, "The party chairman will be selected by the General Conference within six months of issuance of the decision, but under the regulations, Diya'-al-Din is fully empowered. The essential important point is that the party will not have a central figure, but a group leadership composed of believers in the fundamentals of the Nasirist program."

[Jabr] But some, especially the young generation, are trying to isolate you. They say that you are trying to become the party chairman.

[Abd-al-Karim] The struggle for a leadership position is "ridiculous" and worthless. If specific individuals are ambitious for a leadership position, they will have to fight for it, if they are able. I emphasize that when the day comes that I feel I am an issue being defended by some and accused by others, I will try to change the situation with all my power and in my favor.

[Jabr] How will you change it?

[Abd-al-Karim] I could leave the party and get away from the controversy. [I am] not a military general, but rather, we tried to build a single Nasirist party based on democracy, not struggle and the search for positions.

[Jabr] Why did you attempt a dialogue with the Islamic tendency?

[Abd-al-Karim] Because real democracy will not be achieved unless every genuine movement gets the freedom to establish a political party. We attempted a dialogue with them on a single point, which is to come together to confront American hegemony and Israel.

[Jabr] But some Nasirists consider [the Islamic] tendency to be more dangerous than America.

[Abd-al-Karim] One positive aspect of this tendency is that it has changed its earlier concept of America as a "friendly" country, to that of an "enemy" of this nation. Its stands have proven that.

Members in Parliament

92AF0734C Cairo ROSE AL-YUSUF in Arabic
27 April 92 p 10

[Article by Hamdi 'Abd-al-'Aziz: "ROSE AL-YUSUF Reveals List of Nasirist Party Members in People's Assembly"]

[Text] Diya'-al-Din Dawud, member of the People's Assembly and chairman of the new [Arab] Nasirist Democratic Party [ANDP], confirmed that he will meet with the Founding Committee in the days ahead, and that the membership door will be opened for two months, preliminary to forming the ANDP's organizational structures in all governorates after the membership applications have been written. He said the ANDP

would include approximately 10,000 founders of the Nasirist Socialist Party, as well as Ahmad Kamal and the founders of the Coalition of People's Forces Party. Thus, there would be a single Nasirist party encompassing everyone.

Dawud refused to reveal independent or the National [Democratic] Party [NDP] deputies in the current assembly who intend to join the new ANDP, stressing that he was determined that matters take their natural democratic form, and that entry into the ANDP be on the basis of total conviction. Among the foremost Nasirist deputies in the present assembly forming the ANDP parliamentary team are Mahmud Zinhum, Muhammad al-Badrashini, Rif'at Bashir, and Faruq Mutawalli.

The number of deputies who will be members of the Nasirist parliamentary team could reach 20, including Mukhtar Jum'ah, the [National Progressive Unionist] Grouping [Party] deputy from Aswan; Muhammad Mahmud al-'Abbasi, an independent from Damietta [al-Dumyat]; and Muhammad al-Sandayuni, an independent deputy from Kafr al-Shaykh.

A Nasirist deputy confirmed that he had been delegated to contact Sulayman al-Zamalut and Nasrallah Husayn Salim, NDP deputies from North Sinai [Governorate]. There is a likelihood that Ahmad Taha, an independent deputy from the Nile delta area, will also join the Nasirists. Meanwhile, Diya'-al-Din Dawud emphasizes that no fewer than 150 NDP deputies in the current People's Assembly are Nasirists, and there may be 200. "But we will not be built on the wreckage of existing parties."

ROSE AL-YUSUF has learned that the Office of the People's Assembly has not yet been advised of the formation of the new ANDP and the number of assembly members who belong to it. Counsellor Sami Mahran, secretary general of the People's Assembly, said that the subject of leadership of the assembly opposition is premature, and that opposition parties represented in the assembly would have to meet to select someone from among themselves to represent opposition leadership under the dome.

Sign of Democracy

92AF0734D Cairo ROSE AL-YUSUF in Arabic
27 April 92 p 11

[Article by Muhammad 'Awdah: "Recognition at Appropriate Time; Nasirist Program To Join Modern Era"]

[Text] The decision affirming the legality of forming a Nasirist party could be the start of establishing a genuine "multi"-party [quotes as published] system.

Pluralism is not a matter of quantity, but of quality. Democracy cannot arise or stabilize without a sound party system, i.e., parties that have principles; platforms;

leaders; and broad bases of harmonious, noncontradictory groups and classes; parties that have a clear, comprehensive outlook on reality and the future.

The [Arab] Nasirist Democratic Party [ANDP] is perhaps the one that has all these components. It was established by a nationalist leader and a historic hero, and it is the sole legitimate heir of the legacy of the nationalist movement.

The Nasirist party is the leader of the social revolution, and had the honor of achieving the deepest change in the oppressive class structure that dominated Egypt for centuries.

The party issued the socialist laws of July and proved their soundness with a development plan that is still a pillar of the economy.

The Nasirist party settled the issue of belonging and identity, that the Egyptians are Arabs, as well as the heirs of all subsequent civilizations throughout their history, and that there is no contradiction between Egyptianism, Arabism, and heritage. The Nasirist party defined the role of Arab Egypt as the vanguard, the leader, and the strike force of the [Arab] nation.

The Nasirist party enjoys the widest popular base and a broad alliance of definitive groups and classes. These are the peasants who were given land in three agricultural reforms that ousted feudalism and restored the peasant's dignity and humanity. They are the workers for whom factories were built. They are the managers, technicians, and technologists who broke the blockade and proved the ability to absorb and move through stages.

The largest modern Arab industrial base was built on them. Nasirists are the educated and the intellectuals for whom the doors of all schools and institutes were opened "free of charge," for whom faculties and universities were constructed, and who were sent on missions to acquire the latest sciences, arts, and cultures.

The Nasirists are the nationalist military men who destroyed the strategic blockade, built the armed forces, waded into battles, faced the most difficult challenges, and remain the fundamental shield protecting the nation.

The objectives of the Nasirist party remain as firm as they were when they began: to liberate the Arab nation and to regain full sovereignty and will.

They are the liberation of Arab society, elimination of exploitation and backwardness, establishment of a "humane" society that keeps pace with the civilization of the modern era, unification of the Arab nation, and the rise of a major power to face the challenges of the age.

These constants do not contradict keeping up with changes. The party will search, and never tire of researching, drilling, creating, and inventing, until it discovers the sound road and safe course through the thick jungle that the world has become.

The Nasirist party remains a nationalist party believing in the right of all people to their nationalism, and that internationalism be built on diversity and equality.

The Nasirist party believes in a comprehensive, humane, democratic socialism having Egyptian and Arab characteristics based on a mixed economy that combines the advantages of individual venture with decentralized planning, whereby a society of plenty, justice, and dignity is achieved.

The Nasirist party believes in religion, and that it is a temporal and spiritual revolution that leads man out of the darkness into the light. It rejects the imported, spurious division of mankind into secular and religious.

The recognition of the Nasirist party came at just the right time. It was certain to come, however long it took. Only it is able to offer a better alternative. The accomplishments it achieved in the briefest period, and the successive slip-ups during the longest period, have proven that the only solutions to our problems are Nasirist ones. Under no condition should this be construed as arrogance or delirium, but as humility and the minimal amount of effort.

The best thing the Nasirist party could start with is a comprehensive review and a critical, objective assessment of the 40 years since the July Revolution, with all its pros and cons, the negatives before the positives, making this document an action agenda for the next 40 years. From this point on, let the people and history be the impartial judge.

IRAQ

Discussion of Food Prices, Local Markets

92AE0377A Baghdad BABIL in Arabic
19, 20, 21 Apr 92

[Dialogue in three installments with Mahmud 'Allush, representative of the General Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Hatim 'Abd-Husayn, director general of the Ministry of Trade's Planning and Followup Department, 'Ali Musa, director of the Ministry of Trade's Commercial Control Department, 'Abd-al-Karim 'Abd-al-Hadi Hamrah, an otherwise unidentified merchant, Ayyad Qasim Sa'id, representative of the Economic Crimes Department, and Jawad Nasrallah Muhammad, owner of a commercial bureau, conducted by 'Abbas al-Janabi, BABIL acting chief editor, no place or date: "BABIL Opens Local Market File: Many Merchants' Addresses Spurious; They Have Transferred Millions of Dinars to Nonexistent Addresses"]

[19 Apr p 3]

[Text] [Al-Janabi] Gentlemen, BABIL newspaper has the pleasure to meet with you and welcome you in the name of 'Udayy Saddam Husayn, who proposed this idea, i.e., a meeting and heated dialogue. Hopefully, the dialogue on the subject of prices will be very hot indeed.

There are many accusations against the merchant, the supervisory agencies, the middlemen, and the [departments of] economic security and economic crimes. Some of the accusations may be true, yet the citizen has no knowledge of them, i.e., he does not know in detail how a merchant operates, how the supervisory agencies operate, or how the chambers of commerce operate in giving permits to people.

The dialogue will be open. We do not want to raise questions, but rather, we want this to be a dialogue concerning prices.

Why do the prices of foodstuffs rise; why do they fall? What is the role of the merchant, the Ministry of Trade, the chambers of commerce, and the supervisory [departments]?

[Allush] It is my pleasure to be a guest of BABIL newspaper, a free podium reflecting the word and identifying phenomena in the citizen's life that concern all of society, of which we are a part.

The overwhelming concern of all people and every class of society is this phenomenon affecting everyone—the continuous rise in the prices of goods and commodities. Every cause has a background and negative aspects. If we go back in time a bit, we find that the socialist trade sector controlled foreign trade for a not-inconsiderable period, during which time it demonstrated its fitness and capability. It provided the various types of commodities in amounts that satisfied market needs. In addition, it was responsible for supplying goods through authorized agents, markets, cooperative associations, and other distribution channels to all levels of society, throughout the country, easily, on time, and at very competitive prices.

The socialist sector worked to provide services, not to make an exaggerated profit. This is a well-known and recognized phenomenon. All this was done based on statistical estimates of local market requirements and a study of actual domestic agricultural and industrial production. This is an extremely important aspect that serves as the basis for guiding importation, and authorizing import allocations and movements from originating countries. That is, they formed the instructions, the import guidelines, and the bases followed by socialist sector agencies in dealing with other countries in order to provide foreign trade goods. They kept out middlemen and contracted directly with the source in order to avoid adding other [profit] margins and costs to the goods supplied.

Later, private activity was allowed to participate by granting import permits for specific sums of money, which were increased on several occasions. Private activity began to supply goods, and socialist sector agencies conducted field surveys to compare sales prices of goods imported by the private sector with those of goods imported and marketed by socialist sector establishments. The results were somewhat encouraging because the prices were close—some higher, and some just a tiny bit lower. But following the Iran-Iraq War and

the thirty-party aggression [Gulf war] to which our beloved country was subjected, another situation has prevailed, namely importation without [state] provision [of hard currency], and now private activity supplies the goods to meet the needs of the domestic market.

We have to distinguish between two types of merchants. The first are those who have the grasp, the experience, and the know-how, and who take a sound professional approach in their dealings; as opposed to those newly-arrived parasitical people who began practicing commercial activity, but did not understand the behavior, traditions, and values a merchant should have. They are considered newcomers. When we compare the two types, we find that the true merchant has a knowledge of import establishments and contacts the supplier directly. Sometimes his financial capability is so good that he will bring in a (chartered) ship at his own expense for a very reasonable rate, close to that of imports contracted for by the state. The newcomer merchant, however, who does not have the financial capability or the know-how, will import goods without understanding whether or not they meet the specifications required, sometimes after the expiration date has run out, or with bad specifications. But this type is not as concerned with these aspects as much as he is with just supplying the goods. He also imports through middlemen. So this method of supplying goods leaves us open to waste and higher costs which the country and the consumer have to bear.

Regarding the role of the Ministry of Trade, it has provided every facility and everything it possibly could to merchants. The ministry has monitored their conditions and their business needs, and has begun to provide them with anything that might facilitate the flow of commodities and the provision of goods, and give them flexibility in dealing. Indeed, there are numerous decrees, even that profits realized by the merchants from the importation of basic foodstuffs will be exempted from customs fees, income tax, and other such matters. The Ministry of Trade has also facilitated and simplified measures with respect to measurement, quality control, laboratory inspection, and the like.

Revolutionary Command Council Decrees [plural as published] 270 of 8 August 1991 dealt with this aspect, as did other decrees which everyone knows about.

[Al-Janabi] You are a representative in the chambers of commerce, which play an important role in evaluating and categorizing a merchant. This is a basic mission.

Do you not find that the chambers of commerce have jammed the markets with what you have called parasites? I mean, where is the role of the chambers of commerce in this matter?

We know, for example, that I, as a well-known, famous first-class merchant, having a series of seven or eight [businessmen who] I give licenses to, will become a middleman to the extent of the funds available, i.e., financial capability is what determines this.

You have given to many on the condition that whoever fulfills thus-and-so, and has a balance of such-and-such, receives a Chamber of Commerce identity [card]. This identity is the gateway through which the merchant is able to transition from a seventh-degree [merchant] to a sixth.

The accusation is leveled at you, as chambers of commerce, that you have encouraged and increased the number of middlemen. The fifth-degree merchant profits, the fourth-degree merchant profits, and the third-, second-, and the first-degree merchants profit also, and all of this profit is taken out of the citizen consumer. Please clarify this.

[Allush] In this regard, I would like to make it clear that a merchant does not necessarily have to belong to the chambers of commerce. Membership in the chambers of commerce used to be compulsory, but now, in order to achieve more flexibility, the highest concerned quarters decided to issue a decree that merchant membership not be required. There are two trends, even in other countries. One is to require merchants to belong to chambers of commerce because there are specific qualifications which one must meet in order to engage in commercial business. There are some other countries that are just the opposite and do not require the merchant to do so.

In Iraq, membership was mandatory, but at present there is no obligation to join. There is a study that was prepared by the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce [BCC] and the Federation of Chambers of Commerce [FCC], and presented to the cabinet and the Ministry of Trade. The response on this subject was to wait and see for now, because conditions are such that a merchant is not required to belong to the chambers of commerce.

Nothing like belonging to the chambers of commerce enables the granting of import or agency licenses or the like. These come under the bailiwick of other bodies—fairs and commercial services [departments].

[Al-Janabi] Do these agencies not rely on you? For example, if I go to the Ministry of Trade and present them with identification that I am a merchant and member of the chambers of commerce, and I ask them for an import permit, then the Ministry of Trade has to grant me an import permit. So you, as the chambers of commerce, have made him into a merchant, even though he really is not. As you know, capital has fled from the industrial to the commercial sector; for example, if I own 1000 Iraqi dinars and want to make them grow, I put them into trade. I cannot make them grow in industry. This is a well-known economic issue, so your role here is that whenever you grant the identity [card] to whoever it may be, you put pressure on other bodies—the Ministry of Trade in order for him to get his import license.

[Allush] There is no pressure from the chambers or the FCC on the agencies working inside the Ministry of Trade with respect to the granting of import, export, or other licenses. Many concerned departments do, however, take into consideration whether a merchant

belongs to the chambers of commerce, his category, his commercial reputation, his standing, his property, and whether he keeps his commitments. Officials in the concerned agencies take all of these matters into consideration when granting agencies and import and export licenses.

But now, any Iraqi citizen has the right to bring in goods, regardless of whether or not he belongs to the chambers of commerce, whoever he is. The important thing is that he is bringing in essential goods and foodstuffs related to a citizen's basic needs, which must be supplied under these circumstances, i.e., the economic blockade imposed on our country.

[Husayn] Mr. Mahmud [Allush] raised the subject of compulsory or non-compulsory membership in the chambers of commerce. Since the decree regarding freedom of membership in unions, associations, and federations has been issued, the person who engages in commercial business is not required to carry chamber of commerce identification. As issued, the decree has both negative and positive aspects. On the negative side, commercial business is beginning to be practiced by groups or persons who have neither the expertise, the experience, nor the capability, and they have really caused tremendous confusion in the market. The positive side of the decree is that it leaves it up to the citizen to decide to belong to an association or not, enabling everyone to engage in this activity without what used to be considered restrictions. Now a merchant joins the chambers of commerce for genuine reasons, i.e., it gives him an identity. He has become a merchant, since any citizen or merchant can take a license for importing without foreign exchange and import all goods without restriction. In the past, the merchant was categorized, to use the colloquial expression, on the basis that this is a merchant specializing in foodstuffs, the other in clothing, and the third in such-and-such. Now, this specialization is gone for good. The merchant who imports foodstuffs is the same one who imports clothing, cigarettes, health items, construction goods, and so on.

Thus, the matter of belonging or not was a large, basic factor restricting a merchant's freedom.

Yes, I agree that one must categorize and distinguish between merchants for many reasons. Most importantly, concerned authorities have to know where the merchant is, his address, who is importing goods, and how to compel him to carry out directives and laws. Right now, the commercial profession is adrift, which is why the middlemen are benefitting more than the major traders in the market. The middlemen are unknown. They have no addresses, and the concerned agencies are tired of chasing them. The subject of belonging to the chamber really does need review and a new study. These merchants should be added to specific levels to enable cooperation with the private commercial sector—I would not say to dominate prices, but at least to control prices within specific limits.

[Allush] Returning to our subject to conclude it, I would say that the process for coordinating activities among the private sector, the Ministry of Trade, and the industrial or agricultural productive sector is pretty well known at the present time, contrary to the situation in the past, when it was done through joint coordination committees involving the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Industry, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation. Private activity has now entered into import operations, [in] the industrial sector, in particular, [where it] has taken responsibility for the production process, and also the agricultural sector. But agricultural production estimates are not being achieved, nor do we know whether industrial production estimates are being achieved within the plans and potential available.

What are the imports of the Ministry of Trade? Does it study the reality of these matters into consideration [as published] when supplying goods. The gap occurs due to a lack of regular influx of goods in a balanced manner, because each sector acts in isolation from the next. This is what causes this problem.

As I see things, it would be nice if there were a coordination process and exchange of information between private activity, concerned agencies in the Ministry of Trade, and the agricultural and industrial sectors, so that we could know what domestic production really is, what distortions are occurring, what private sector imports are, and compare them with socialist sector imports. Then we could find out what the need of the domestic market is, and what we have to supply to ensure an easy and balanced influx of goods. There are seasonal goods, for example, that have to be supplied in the specific amounts needed, for example, during the pilgrimage season and the month of Ramadan, i.e., there are goods of a distinctive consumer nature which are known and defined. This point deserves attention and study.

The other side concerns the role of the media and their agencies. In my view, I have identified shortcomings in the media's performance of its role. I hope that it will improve its tasks in a way that actually gives it a distinct, active role. It could then conduct its mission in the desired manner. Given the economic blockade imposed upon us, all efforts must be exerted if we are to pass through this ordeal. To do so, we need the mass, popular, and professional organizations, and the media agencies concerned. Luxury goods and the comforts of life do not have to come in. The most important thing at the present time is that basic and essential goods be available, so that we do not squander the position of our economy, our currency, and other important aspects to which we assign primary consideration. Sugar, for example, is used for many things, not just for tea, but for sweets, pastries, and other such things. These are luxuries, the media must direct the citizen to avoid things that are not essential and that involve waste. Another way in which the media has failed, as I see it, is by publishing the news of price reductions, because our citizens were quickly affected by the news. They thronged to buy goods, and as a result, prices again started to rise to where they had been. The

media contributed indirectly to high prices at a time when the price drop was only five or seven percent, i.e., a tiny percentage that did not deserve a news report, which had the negative impact of a price rise.

[20 Apr p 3]

[Text] On a directive from Board Chairman Mr. 'Udayy Saddam Husayn, BABIL has innovated the opening of a serious and unique dialogue by putting the parties concerned with a single subject face to face to fight out their ideas and proposals in the service of truth affecting the life of the Iraqi citizen. This "hot" confrontation differs in its method and approach from "Tuesday's Tent," which BABIL continues to conduct with various strata of our society.

Since food has a major importance in our daily lives, and because its market ebbs and flows, increases and decreases, Mr. 'Udayy Saddam Husayn directed the opening of this section as a window from which the public can view what is happening in our local market.

[Allush] [Continued from previous installment] There also has to be a role for the Iraqi family through the General Federation of the Women of Iraq, as a mass organization. The woman of the family should determine consumption and economize under these circumstances so that we do not expand our imports and do not rely in our dealings on imports, in order to achieve self-sufficiency. We are well-endowed agriculturally and industrially, so the public is capable of sacrificing during a certain stage. Someone who fails to obtain a nonessential item will not die. It can be replaced by other things that contain sufficient food value to ensure his life.

Even at wakes and other occasions, there is waste in giving banquets. These also have a negative impact on the economy, in terms of higher prices.

[Musa] I would like to discuss the subject of belonging to the chambers of commerce, solely as it relates to the supervisory role. In the past, membership in the chambers was compulsory. No one could engage in commercial business unless he belonged to the chamber of commerce of the governorate in which he resided and where his business location was. This way, we knew the number of merchants and the category they were in. If we wanted statistical figures, we knew the number of merchants who imported clothing, the standby equipment merchants, those in perfumes, and those in household goods. We could prepare statistics and know the addresses of each of them. Likewise, there were also statistical records of the amounts they imported and the import licenses they were given for each type of goods assigned to them. At one time, all commodities entering the country had their prices fixed. We monitored them through their addresses [word illegible] and their trade names through transactions with the bank.

The circumstances we have passed through are abnormal. In the beginning, the purpose of allowing

every Iraqi to import was that anyone having the material ability, whether inside the country or abroad, or residents having a knowledge of the outside world, could bring in goods or foodstuffs to flood the market and fill the public's eyes. This was the basic purpose of making belonging to the chambers of commerce elective, in addition to the other decree that there be no specialization in commercial business, and that anyone has the right to import any goods. When one had to belong to the chambers of commerce, someone who imported fabrics had no right to deal in or import any other goods. If he dealt in perfumes, then he had no right to deal in other things. We would take measures against them in the event of an infraction. Despite the positive side of allowing them to bring in any goods to flood the market, however, the negatives resulting from the application of these instructions were greater than the positives. Parasites with no knowledge of commerce entered the market for the purpose of benefitting in an abnormal and illegal manner, deceiving the public, and [taking advantage of] what is happening with respect to commodity prices at present.

Another thing is that a review of statistics at the Central Bank shows that after the foreign transfer by those who were allowed to take sums of money abroad to import foodstuffs, many turned out to have spurious addresses. They transferred very large sums of money, some in the millions, without a specific address. Something else in this process led to confusion in the marketplace. There were instances of deception between merchants that affected commercial activity in general. The infractions uncovered by the Economic Security [Department, ESD] [perhaps Economic Crimes Department] are the best testimony to the deception practiced by these persons. Up to now, genuine merchants were only very rarely involved in deceptive operations, i.e., when a merchant would declare an unusual case of bankruptcy, one in a thousand merchants at that time, and it would cause an uproar. Now, however, deceptive operations among merchants, specifically among the wholesalers, has caused an abnormal amount of confusion. All of this has been reflected in higher prices. The confusion had a very substantial negative effect on the local market. There is a study to take another look at belonging to the chambers of commerce, but circumstances at present are not appropriate.

[Hamrah] Thank you for the generous invitation extended to us by BABIL newspaper to attend this discussion. Price fluctuations in the market are due to several factors. The first and most important one is fluctuation in Iraqi currency exchange rates outside the country and the very many people who have interposed themselves. For example, any Arab driver can bring in goods in his name. The second thing is the large number of middlemen, some of whom are sometimes the victims of a foreign supplier who imports goods in his name, gets them out of customs, has no fixed address, sells them at 10 in the evening at the Jamilah market, takes his money, and runs. For example, many times they brought

in [tomato] paste whose expiration date had run out. Assuming that the price of a case of paste is \$400, while the person not specialized in buying and selling paste takes it for \$300, we find that unbelievable sums are involved in a truckload of 1,000 cartons of paste—100,000 dinars. The next day when the ESD or the Health [Department] come, and perhaps the purchaser neither reads nor writes, so he has not discovered that the goods are past the expiration date. Some bring sacks of flour weighing 45 kg instead of 50, or sacks of rice weighing 48 kg [instead of 50]. No one weighs them, because the customer does not have a scale in his car to determine the weight of a sack of flour or rice and check it. Sometimes certain goods will be lacking in the market and have to be brought in from abroad. Recently, for example, we brought in potatoes that cost us \$187 a ton delivered in Baghdad, when there were not any potatoes in the market. Based on the dollar exchange rate for the week, the price of a kilogram was 3.027 dinars. The gentlemen from the ESD came and said, "It is forbidden for you to sell without our supervision." After they arrived, they asked us to sell the kilogram for 2.700 dinars, even though the price delivered in Baghdad is 3.027 dinars. We said, "At least let us have a profit, even if it is just one percent." They said, "No, sales have to be at 2.700 dinars." We agreed to the price, but then they said, "You have to give them a 3-percent discount," even though nowhere in the world is there a discount. A ton is 1,000 kg. Why are you forcing us to sell the ton as 970 kg?

They said, "Because there was spoilage," and so on. In the end, the potatoes were sold at the price set by the ESD, but the consumer did not get a kilogram of potatoes for 3.500 dinars, and it might go higher, i.e., to 5.000 dinars. Every case is like this. I would say that the many middlemen and the occasional unjust price regulation are things that need to be reviewed if the market is to stabilize. There are respectable merchants who want the business, and who can feed the market. I am certain that they will accept a 1-percent profit, because merchandise is expensive. A good (and honest) merchant will sell 100,000 dinars worth of merchandise every day at a 1-percent profit, i.e., 1,000 dinars. This is a very nice reward that you will not find anywhere in the world. Our problems are the host of middlemen and fluctuation in the dollar rate.

[Sa'id] We thank you for this frank get-together at BABIL newspaper. More than anyone else, people know that the basic objective of the work of our department is to achieve price stability in the market. Our department has analyzed the circumstances and conditions that lead to price fluctuations and unjustified increases. One which we have defined, and which has been referred to by others here, is the presence of middlemen in such large numbers in the market. When a truck loaded with flour arrives at one of the import traders, for example, the importer will sometimes allow the truck to unload slowly at his shop, and he will sell it, sometimes in small amounts, 10 or 20 sacks, one at a time. Then we find that

a middleman will approach him and say, "I will give you so much to buy it." He takes the truck while it is still loaded, especially when he knows that very little flour of such quality is in the market. Afterwards, he buys all of the flour brought in that day, and thereby obtains five or six truckloads from the market. First of all, the middleman has gotten a monopoly on flour, even though he is a middleman, not an importer. He, in turn, has two options, either to sell it to another middleman who will also carry it, or to begin distributing it down to the street peddlers, who are also middlemen, and who also raise the price. What happens in this instance is adulteration, including opening the bag of flour and putting some other harmful substance in it, even plaster. This middleman has no fixed location. Meanwhile, the original merchant, who is known in the market, cannot do this out of fear for his reputation. We will expose and monitor him. But the middleman sold the amount he had, left the market, and his identity and whereabouts are unknown. He has no fixed address or shop that we can use to find him. If we had informers in the market, we could get to this person, but even so, some would get away.

This is the situation of middlemen that leads to price increases. There are other issues—sugar, for example, which is always the commodity most subject to high prices. We find that there are sweets and soft drink plants, even though they are banned.

[Al-Janabi] Banned only in the media, but not banned in actuality.

[Sa'id] Yes, not banned in actuality. True, we arrest many such cases. It turns out that they operate inside homes and areas that cannot be seen. Even so, we carried out campaigns to uncover them. During Ramadan, dozens of vehicles loaded with sweets were seized. Even the owners of these plants did not expect that we would get to the original distribution source. The citizen also plays a contributory role in higher prices. For example, he hears a rumor that such-and-such is happening in the market. There is a strong, sudden thronging into the market of people who begin buying things with all the cash they have. This encourages the merchants to raise prices because demand is high and supply is limited, which is a well-known economic theory. Another point is that we find a merchant in Baghdad who has 10 million [dinars] in merchandise every day. You find that they are telephoning abroad about the dollar rate. If it has increased, they immediately begin raising prices, even though the goods they bought were for a different dollar rate at the time. Why are there these price increases? This is an individual case, not all merchants. But there is a segment of the merchants who resort to this method of unjustified price hikes, even though they already have the merchandise in the warehouse at a certain price. Whenever they hear that the dollar rate is such-and-such, the price goes up.

So, well-known merchants with reputations and good standing in the market, certainly men of expertise in the trading community and commercial activity, must first limit the middlemen.

[Hamrah] For example, I have two sales areas at the Jamilah markets in the first block. This is a very wide block. The streets surrounding it leading to us are unreachable, so I am forced to sell to the middleman, because the customer can not reach me. Neither vehicles nor the customer are available, so you find middlemen. Key money [fee paid for a lease] in Jamilah is up to 300,000, 400,000, and 500,000 dinars to lease shops. They paid me a million dinars as key money for one of my shops. How much does it take for someone who pays this much, and rents for 60,000 dinars, to make it up? This is the reality of the situation. You will find that many non-Iraqis have opened shops in this market, and sell directly. They know how to sell merchandise and get their money.

[Sa'id] Then who is encouraging the middlemen? If the importing merchants were present, they could be doing the selling, and the middlemen would not be needed.

[Al-Janabi] One has to be specific. I know, for example, that Abu-Tahsin gave merchandise to Makki. Since I know them both, I will hold both accountable. You, as the ESD, have to deal in this manner.

[Hamrah] We find there are many non-Iraqis in the market. Every two hours their faces change. You certainly are not going to know his address or who he is. He just gets his money, and leaves the market; and he may have brought in adulterated goods and sold them to the public.

[Musa] Initially, merchants had a very big, prominent role in providing foodstuffs during the circumstances we are passing through. Some risked their lives and fortunes, and went abroad under very difficult circumstances. They imported goods under the gloomiest conditions and played an admirable role. The Ministry of Trade has not forgotten merchants who gambled their lives and souls to provide food supplies under very difficult conditions, just like the fighting men on the front. This is undeniably the case. But having said that, are all merchants committed to a regular, acceptable profit? The answer is no. We have indications that some merchants accept a small profit and are committed not to accept the abnormal circumstances through which we are passing, but others exploit conditions in the state and any sudden emergency to raise prices abnormally and unjustifiably. Now the major reasons for ups and downs in prices are that the current market price of goods is determined by using the exchange rates of the dinar and the dollar, inside the country and abroad, and the strength of demand for goods. This is the present situation, which appears from time to time. These are the primary reasons for rising and falling prices.

Other unusual causes we have noted with respect to some merchants are that a specific merchant, or a number of

them, have imported merchandise at the dollar exchange rate, let us suppose 15 Iraqi dinars. At the time, the dinar rate was 60 or 80 fils. They bought goods delivered to Baghdad at a price of 300 dinars for a sack of rice or sugar, for example, to which five or 10 dinars was added. It was then sold for 305 or 310 dinars. These used to be the rates.

The moment there is a demand for goods because of a certain news item on the radio or in the newspapers, or one carried on the foreign news, you will find the very merchant who had been selling for 310 or 305 [dinars] has raised the price to 320 dinars, or 330 or 340. Sometimes the price of a sack reaches 400 dinars, even though the goods are inside his shop, and even though he had not imported them at a price higher than the price they had been. There was no change in the price. This situation has been noted regarding some merchants, and it is unacceptable. Mind you, we have the names of merchants in al-Sirrah who stand there and sell the first ten items for 300 dinars. From the 11th to 20th item, he sells for 320; from the 21st to 40th, for 350; and so on. By the time he closes the shop, he is selling a sack for 400 dinars. The next day it is 410 and climbing, and so on. This is an imposed situation. What is causing the high price when the goods are in his shop? They have been influenced. The other negative influence on some merchants is that when he has goods in the shop imported at a regular price, should he hear—and some of them are in daily communication with their suppliers abroad—that the rate for the Iraqi dinar fell or the dollar rate rose, he will immediately raise the price of the goods he already has.

[21 Apr p 3]

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Since food has a major importance in our daily lives, and because its market ebbs and flows, increases and decreases, Mr. 'Udayy Saddam Husayn directed the opening of this section as a window from which the public can view what is happening in our local market.

[Musa] [Continued from previous installment] When asked why he is selling goods at a greater price, his answer is that the rate of the dinar abroad fell, or the dollar rate rose. However, he does not apply the same principle when the situation is reversed, i.e., he does not lower the price of goods when he hears that the dinar rate has risen or the dollar rate is lower. He only follows it when the Iraqi dinar has fallen, in order to raise prices. When we ask him, "Why do you not lower the price of commodities you already have after having heard that the dinar rate is higher?" his response is that he has not

yet imported at the new rates. These are the methods they use to promote their own selfish interests.

[Hamrah] None of the items subject to the ration card are covered by the import license, nor by any document or lists, just the customs manifest. So, if you conduct a statistical study, it can only be through customs. Only this will let you know the amounts of commodities that have actually arrived, and who is actually dealing in them.

[Musa] Actually, there is collaboration with customs to inform the ministry of every amount that comes in. There is coordination between customs and the Ministry of Trade and Importation [as published] to determine the amounts that enter.

The other negative point noted with respect to some merchants is that when an item is scarce for some particular reason, some of them sell to several middlemen, even though as merchants, as I understand it, anyone they sell to they know. They know so-and-so is from this governorate, so-and-so's shop is close by, and so on. They know the middlemen as a result of dealing with them. They even know that this middleman is one who sets a low profit on an item, or that the other is greedy and sells for an abnormal price. Some merchants send goods to middlemen in the governorates without even verifying those who are in al-Basrah or al-Mawsil, i.e., they are in agreement and trust one another in transactions. After all, the basis of trade is trust. But what is really saddening is that the newcomers and the parasites who have started trading under these circumstances have had an unusual impact on prices. Goods are sold while they are still in the trucks to five merchants, each of whom adds a price on top. They are at an unusually high price when they reach the consumer, and all he can do is pay. The Ministry of Trade, in coordination with the chambers of commerce and the ESD, recently issued directives that, under these abnormal circumstances, ban the merchant from selling to middlemen. Rather, he has to sell directly to the public. We asked some to open shops to sell at retail. Some merchants did so, opened shops, and began filling 5- or 10-kg bags, and so on. Others are selling specific-sized bags. This now exists and is under control in the latest crisis because of our presence and that of the ESD. This does not mean the operation is 100-percent effective. There has been some leakage because the shops are not located in the districts of Jamilah or al-Shawrajah, but in outlying areas. Some have offices dispersed throughout Baghdad and its suburbs, which are not fully under control. The geographic extent of merchants and middlemen has expanded in an unusual manner.

The Ministry of Trade has now started a list to record the names of merchants who are dealing. Every day we record the prices of goods that a merchant sells, and some staples, even though they are not subject to price regulation. We do not ask them to set a particular price, but this is taken down. Hopefully, after the blockade is over, we will have these notes on every merchant. We

will say to him that, under these particular circumstances, you exploited the situation and sold at irregular prices. You exploited the circumstances. We will say to him that we shall not give you any advantages. We will tell the merchant who cooperated with the state, however, made normal profits, and made goods available under irregular circumstances, that, as a merchant, you did your patriotic duty under those circumstances. We will give you facilities, and the possibility of any others that the ministry of the state may provide to committed merchants. The other thing is that there is a lot of talk of about merchants, in general, and a segment of the populace does not know how much their profits are. I suggest that the merchants themselves address this situation. How much an item costs to import, how much transportation is added, what does it cost to get to Baghdad, and how much it is sold for, at least. As the press, you [should] make this clear to the public, so that they know that the price of merchandise delivered in Baghdad is so much due to dinar and dollar expenditures and wages, and it is sold for so much, so that the merchant's profit for certain items does not exceed 10-12 percent.

Another thing that some merchants are blamed for is that when there is some particular crisis resulting in an internal demand for goods, they clamor to import goods from the foreign source. When the merchant there sees such clamoring, he starts raising the price in an abnormal way in response to their competition to buy. This is reflected on the consumer. It could be that it is the intervention of middlemen and parasites that has caused this situation, because the well-known, committed merchants do not do this. These are points that we have confirmed against some merchants, in addition to their patriotic role in making goods available.

[Abd-Husayn] The fact is that the situation of the commercial market in Iraq is certainly—and everyone knows that the imposition of the unjust blockade on our country, and by a simple analysis of price movements and causes in the market, we find there are many factors [sentence as published]. The primary factor is imbalance in the buyer-seller equation, i.e., between the merchant and the purchaser. At the present time, the merchant is not a merchant in the real or generally accepted sense. Now there are very many merchants, or people engaged in trade. Even the ordinary citizen has started engaging in commerce, thereby creating a situation of disorderly movement of commodities, with a resultant direct effect on prices, very large fluctuations, and failure of the merchant to absorb his mission to provide commodities in a scientific and economic manner. The Iraqi market is also known now to be a consumer market. It is the market of the consumer, and foreign markets are supplementary to Iraqi markets. What is happening now, because of a lack of awareness or knowledge on the part of the Iraqi merchant, is that he is highly, quickly, and sensitively affected by the foreign market, just the opposite of the earlier situation when an importer, or merchant in general, would buy commodities. When the

slightest event occurs, regardless of whether it is a genuine movement in the foreign market, it immediately has a quick and sensitive impact on the Iraqi merchant. For example, [if] he hears a rumor or a political statement by enemies abroad, the price abroad is affected, and the commodity is affected, regardless of whether the effect is genuine or not. The foreign market always pulls the Iraqi market into an abnormal situation, causing big price increases. If only the Iraqi merchant had sufficiently great understanding that he could know whether or not there actually had been price increases, or an increase in supply abroad, i.e., the supply of goods, or whether there is a scarcity. [In other words], do these factors that consume so much Iraqi currency actually exist? If so, he can think it over, not be so hasty in letting the foreign market exert its pull. A mere rumor and the Iraqi merchant runs and tries to buy the largest amount from the merchant there. When the foreign merchant sees the Iraqi merchant's impulsiveness, he begins to raise the price. If the Iraqi merchant were actually to realize this situation, and ponder it when he finds there is abnormal movement in the foreign market against him, he would stop, not be impulsive, and not make a move. He has the commodity, and he should try to organize it. This is one side. The other side of the equation is the consumer, who plays a big role in price fluctuation and stability. Let us examine the public's commodity needs. For us, the basic commodity is food. The state provides the citizen with a reasonable amount of food through the ration card. Commodities are basic, and a portion of them are not sufficient, it is true. The other portion is sufficient, or during the month he can limit his consumption of them. He does not need the market. But now, as soon as a citizen hears that [the price of] an item has risen, he rushes to the market without restraint, just like the merchant. If the citizen actually restrained himself and thought it over when he finds there is movement in the market, then we could actually see if there really is a demand for the commodity or not. A simple calculation shows that every month the state distributes about 300,000 tons of foodstuffs, flour, rice, sugar, tea, and other powders, through the ration card, not including other items. Under no conditions do the combined imports of all the merchants in Iraq account for more than 10-15 percent of the total foodstuffs distributed. This means that the public's actual need really is the 10-15 percent that the merchant now represents. Therefore, the state is providing numbers that may be a surprise to the reader, which is to say, the merchant provides only 10-15 percent of the ration card, while the remaining 85-90 percent is provided by the state. Part of it [commodities] is 100 percent [provided by the ration card]. Flour is now 100 percent. We find that the citizen in some areas sells flour, because it is more than he needs, i.e., the state provides the citizen 85 percent of his foodstuffs. So if the citizen really had this remaining 10-15 percent, even if he were to go to the market and buy two or more kilograms and refrain from buying sacks, the prices would never rise. In other words, the citizen now has a major and basic role in limiting prices and preventing any scarcity in the market. We are not

blaming the citizen for buying foodstuffs, but I do question his consumption of other goods—clothes, for example. Why are they expensive? The reason is the citizen. That is, when I, as a citizen, continue to make all of my purchases as if the situation were normal, with no blockade, an absence of production, or imports. Prices are certainly rising. The proof is these shops in the streets and the high key money. The citizen plays a big role in whether a price will be unstable or will be maintained. Factors behind price fluctuations may actually be objective and intrinsic, or most of the time, psychological.

The state has now issued some instructions and rules for regulating this market. It really needs to have the merchants' cooperation with state agencies in this area.

Mr. Abu-Tansin ['Abd-al-Karim 'Abd-al-Hadi Hamrah] referred to the role of some non-Iraqis in the market, and to his secluded shop. I would say that those big merchants can play a major role by entering as their competitors, i.e., instead of his shop being at the end of the street, he could rent a shop in the midst of them and compete with them in one way or another. Then the consumer could come directly to him, and the small merchant could reach him and not leave the middlemen controlling the market. These are internal marketing factors. It is very difficult to set out specific rules, because, as those of you dealing in the market have indicated, the numbers are very large, and it is hard to organize them, unless the regulatory rules are monitored and applied by state agencies in full. Under present circumstances, however, this is difficult. The objective now is to make the item available, which means breaking the blockade. This is the first and final objective of state agencies: to break the blockade and to supply a basic level of food. As for the subject of prices, that is a second stage. The citizen is able to control the price, not the merchant.

The private sector merchant has played a positive role during this stage, when compared to private sector industry or agriculture. The private sector industrial role really is very limited and has no positive function at this stage, and agriculture likewise.

I am pleased to offer great thanks to BABIL newspaper for giving us the opportunity to make these clarifications. In the event we need to show the public how prices are determined, there are tables specifying them, the cost of each item delivered to Baghdad in dollars, and the profit margin for each one on which the merchant makes a profit. You will find that the profit is small, but when the item gets to the citizen—and this is the basic problem—the prices rise. The Ministry of Trade has done everything possible to intervene in the market with the merchants, and has adopted a process of continual coordination. Every two weeks, we invite the merchants to negotiate market prices. Whenever there is movement or signs of increase, the merchants will be invited. The minister of trade meets with them continually, and holds frank discussions with them on various topics.

The ministry has also intervened in the market. It began to sell sugar when the price rose. It provides allotments to the central markets at the commercial price for civil servants and those with limited incomes.

The Ministry of Trade is continually taking many measures in a direct manner, and coordinating with officials at the ESD. It had been hoped during the past stage that the merchants would arrive at a situation where they understood market conditions and the circumstances that the country is passing through, in general. A large number of them responded.

[Musa] Having determined that one of the major reasons for price increases is abnormal public demand upon hearing a particular rumor, I would like to use this forum to direct an appeal to all the information media, and mass and party organizations, especially the people's councils, the General Federation of Iraqi Women, the press, and the television in particular, to increase programs, symposia, and articles calling on the citizen to rationalize consumption, particularly under our present circumstances. In my view, the role required of agencies having the primary function to inform the public of this has been absent. Although we in the Ministry of Trade, as overseers of commerce, have come to feel that public demand for goods in the recent crisis, which followed the cutting of air routes between us and foreign countries was not the same as it was in the previous crisis. The public felt that there was the possibility of prices returning to what they were in the past. This is why they were less. However, if the mass and party organizations and the press, in particular, works to alert the public not to go to the local markets and purchase items abnormally when they hear a specific piece of news or rumor, then they will have a big and basic role in reducing demand, and consequently, in stabilizing or maintaining prices as they were. This is particularly true after the Ministry of Trade increased certain staple items based on a directive by our president and leader, may God protect him. Whenever resources improve, other staple items are increased. Lack of demand for items from the local market is what increases the items available, with the result that prices are protected.

[Muhammad] I thank the BABIL newspaper for this opportunity. A while back, the state distributed sugar to establishments along the streets and in popular districts by truck. The distribution took place in popular districts, where not many heads of families could afford to purchase a sack of sugar. They can only afford five kg. The price of a sack of sugar at the time was 290 dinars. It could have been distributed to agents by the state or the major distributor at a small, but useful, profit for redistribution in the form of kilogram [packages]. The country is fine, in spite of the economic blockade, thank God, but some are trying to monopolize some items, including sugar, in order to raise their prices. For example, they are making sweets, even though this is banned. However, they have many ways, in their homes and elsewhere, to make sweets and sell them.

[Allush] Regarding how to deal with price fluctuations resulting from the exchange rate of the Iraqi dinar against such foreign currencies as the dollar, for example, I suggest that there be a process of coordination and regulation; regulation and placing controls on those who import without restraint at the present time, for although it has its positive aspects, there are also negatives. Real merchants have controls, bases, and modes of coordination with the official agencies responsible for importation from the primary source at acceptable prices that are genuinely competitive, true, and accurate. If the merchant's efforts are now coordinated with the establishment concerned with importing goods in commercial quantities, and at the real prices, then sale prices can be unified between the establishments concerned in the socialist sector and the importers in charge of marketing and organizing the marketing process. The current situation is that the merchant is allowed to contract with the concerned establishment in the socialist sector to supply and sell goods at a specific price, i.e., issuing a price list from time to time that realizes a profit attractive and acceptable to the importing merchant.

[Al-Janabi] As we close this meeting, I thank you for attending this invitation. We hope that this symposium has been useful for people to learn how the commercial market operates and the causes of price fluctuations and high prices.

ISRAEL

IG Report on Sharon's Housing Activities

Sharon Responds to Report

92AE0363A Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT (Weekend Supplement) in Hebrew 1 May 92 pp 1, 8

[Article by Ari'el Sharon: "Protect the Comptroller's Office"]

[Text] To the good fortune of the State of Israel, the Ministry of Construction and Housing did not succumb to anxiety about two years ago, like many others in the country, and was not deterred by the spiteful glee of others, but concentrated on its work and, at the cost of a huge effort, it resolved the housing problems in Israel on an unprecedented scale.

There is no shortage of self-styled, post-factum wise men; but people capable of providing solutions—quickly and under extreme pressure—are unfortunately very few.

I did not panic then and I am not now getting caught up in the present criticism hysteria.

The ridicule did not scare me then, just as now I am not weakening under the piling malice and wickedness emerging from every direction. At the Construction Ministry we continue our immigration absorption work resolutely, intent on the objective, and quietly. Some 420,000 new immigrants and tens of thousands of

Israelis already received a roof over their heads and we hope that this is only a beginning.

What with the great concern with a few corporate topics concerning the Construction Ministry—which indeed need to be inspected and checked to ensure that no violations were committed—the report on the ministry itself has been almost forgotten and none of the commentators bothered to find out what was true in it and what was not.

The report consisted of three parts regarding the Ministry of Construction and Housing:

- Genuine findings that need to be corrected or changed—we have already taken the required actions, whether at the initiative of the State Comptroller's Office, or at our own initiative.

- Another component was the fear that violations may have been committed. In this respect the verification must be done by means of the tools of a democratic law-governed state, rather than passing verdict without checking. As we recall, the comptroller's reports do not serve as evidence for any court or disciplinary process.

My appeal is, stop the pursuit. Stop playing with people's fate: they have families, children, and parents. Let the law handle it.

- The third and most dangerous part was made up of many utterly incorrect claims made by the Comptroller's Office, without any foundation in reality. I absolutely reject and dismiss these claims.

Some people told me: "Do not react, the comptroller will be gaining in popularity and the public will not like it."

I did not agree. There is nothing sacred about things that are not true. I said, We must not accept dilettantism and lack of professionalism as the norm because of the alleged sacred nature of the institution. It was perhaps a sense of strength and power, a feeling that no one will dare rebel, that led to the lack of professionalism and in its wake, to the glaring injustice.

The examples abound. I will cite only a few.

The caravans and mobile homes—describing them as allegedly expensive in comparison to other housing, was false. The opposite is true, and we have all the documents and figures.

Absence of a master plan and planning for siting them—nonsense. We have all the documents and reports.

Low demand for mobile homes—there is no foundation for this claim. For each mobile home there are currently three demands by people who want to live in them.

The claim about deviation from the budget and failure to timely warn about the budget shortage—is not true, and we have all the relevant documents.

Failure to take steps against contractors who produced poor quality work—this claim is not true.

Lack of architectural variety—a matter of taste, but still a basically groundless claim.

Lack of supervision during construction—an incorrect claim, and we have proof of that.

Deviation from land appropriation regulations—everything was done in line with the government decisions. We have the documents.

That is how major and essential topics were treated, and unfortunately, the less essential items, too.

The State Comptroller Office is a necessary institution in a democratic, law-governed country, but publishing incorrect reports and refusing to amend them will seriously damage this important control institution.

Also, the report inflicted serious and perhaps irreversible damage on this monitoring institution and on its contribution to correct management, in view of the manner and timing of its publication. Consciously if not necessarily intentionally, the comptroller authority in fact acted as both judge and "executioner," and it did all that before the defendant had a real chance to prove that the main points of accusation were false and that its most important findings were incorrect (at least in the eyes of the Construction Ministry).

The Comptroller's Office must now see what is going on in the media, which it should have foreseen in advance.

Claims or suspicion of actual criminal violations should have been brought to the attention of the attorney general or the police, at least for the sake of the norms of public hygiene, as soon as they were uncovered, instead of waiting until less than two months before the elections. Not to mention that the political affiliation was strangely, and most probably not incidentally, pointed out.

The obligation to inform the public is one of the established foundations of a democratic system, especially before an election. Consequently, in my opinion, it was necessary and important to publish all the facts appearing in the inspection report in a correct and verified form before the elections. The question was only the timing. When the timing does not give the inspection subjects any chance of responding seriously, it is no longer a matter of the citizen's right to information, but of causing destructive anarchy.

Given the present timing, when preelectoral passions are mounting, we find it almost impossible to expose the dilettantism, lack of professionalism, and at times even ignorance of the inspectors, and the investigative system and the attorney general do not even have an opportunity to decide if there is any substance to the suspicions.

The outcome is that instead of making an essential and useful contribution to the smooth functioning of the

administration, the publication of the report in this form and at this time appears as an unilateral interference, perhaps not intentional, but certainly conscious, in the electoral system.

I fear that in fact this publication appears as designed to serve political interests and as destructive to the national interest.

As one who views the State Comptroller institution as very important, I appeal for protecting it. Let us all be more careful, lest we destroy this office of inspection.

Former Housing Director General

92AE0363B Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT (Weekend Supplement) in Hebrew 1 May 92 pp 4-5

[Interview with former Housing Ministry Director General Amiqam Oren, by Naomi Levitzky: "All the Decisions That Involved Deviations Were Taken in Minister Sharon's Office"]

[Text] Colonel (R) Amiqam Oren experienced his term as director general of the Housing Ministry as a nightmare. About two years ago, in the summer of 1990, freshly appointed Housing Minister Arik Sharon plucked him out of the Air Force and appointed him director general of his ministry. Oren, a former head of the construction department of the Air Force, who at the time was in charge of the prestigious "Friendship" project—a large housing project for the defense apparatus—jumped at the opportunity.

One year ago, only eight months after taking office, Oren left the Housing Ministry with his tail between his legs and joined a private company that manages construction projects. Since his departure from the Housing Ministry he has been lying low and refusing to give interviews. Now for the first time he talks about Sharon's working style and that of his close associates and explains why he resigned.

Oren was not really surprised by the findings of the state comptroller. While to Sharon this harsh report was only another pesky fly to wave away, for his former director general it was more than a minor nightmare. During his term Oren, 42, was hospitalized twice with heart attack symptoms. He described the time of his work with Sharon as the most difficult period in his life. The problems, he said, began from the very first moment.

[Oren] My first disappointment was about the subject of political appointments. All the other appointments at the ministry and at subsidiary companies were made without me. I found out that not only did I have no say about anything concerning appointments, but I was not even consulted. I was even reprimanded about contacts regarding professional advisers.

When various non-profit organizations began to pop up I decided to appoint Shoshana Weinschel as adviser for nonprofit organizations. At the management meeting at which I announced the appointment, ministerial aide

Qobi Katz suddenly left the room, called Arik up, and returned with a piece of paper on which the minister was instructing me to immediately cancel the appointment. And so, at the beginning of the meeting I announced the appointment and at the end I announced its cancellation. Sharon reprimanded me and said that no appointment or connection was to be done without coordinating with him.

I was stunned. Even an ad-hoc adviser for a limited period of time, who was to be subordinated to a deputy department head, even that had to be a political appointment? The matter of the non-profit organizations was of course abandoned and the outcome can be seen in the comptroller's report.

Then came a string of appointments, all of them inside the ministry and all of them of the kind that, as director general, I was responsible for their performance, but they were all made in the minister's office, usually without involving me.

[Levitzky] That is as far as appointments went, but the comptroller's report states that the Housing Ministry was literally recruited to work for political objectives, including its huge budget, and that at a very critical time. How did such a thing happen?

[Oren] You stake out all the mayors and heads of various councils, invite them for a marathon of meetings with the minister, and there you generously pass out the Housing Ministry budget. Dozens of meetings and discussions at none of which the budget restrictions are mentioned as anything to be taken into account. And after that people are surprised to see the budget exceeded by hundreds of millions and perhaps billions of shekels.

[Levitzky] What did you do, as director general of the Housing Ministry? Did you sit on those meetings and kept quiet?

[Oren] I very soon stopped attending those discussions, usually out of my own free choice. All those meetings had a political, rather than a professional character, and I did not want to be a party to that political orgy. I chose to concentrate on current and professional affairs.

Once Arik was quoted saying that the blame for the budget deviations should be laid on me. Laughable. All the decisions that led up to this incredible deviation were taken in the minister's office, sometimes behind locked doors, without me. The question of how much money we had to spend was never relevant. In some cases confused ministry functionaries came to me to ask what to do about the minister's instructions that were in contradiction to the ministry procedures, to professional criteria, and to the budget limits. I had no choice but to confirm his instructions retroactively.

[Levitzky] Why did you confirm those instructions if they were so illogical?

[Oren] Here we come to the real conflict. One cannot work against the minister all the time. The high and

progressively increasing frequency of situations of this kind brought me into a state of very severe stress. On the one hand I strongly wished to please the minister, who was my commanding officer in the Air Force. On the other hand, I wanted to remain faithful to a system of professional and moral values and principles to which the Air Force had educated me.

The conflict between those two wishes led me to a state of internal tension such as I had never experienced before. That caused me great emotional distress, in the wake of which I twice found myself hospitalized. Twice I had clear heart failure symptoms and twice the tests showed nothing. After that I went on working for a few months, until I decided to resign.

[Levitzky] If you stayed after two such events, what nevertheless brought you to resign in the end?

[Oren] I realized that I was increasingly serving as the minister's professional fig leaf. It became clear to me that my role was to cover up the nakedness, because from a professional viewpoint I had lost control of what was going on and I could not bear the responsibility stemming from my office as director general.

I found myself increasingly approving decisions post factum, many of which often became known to me accidentally, after they had been taken. Sometimes a week would pass and all of a sudden, in an insignificant encounter in the corridor, I would learn about some decisions that meant hundreds of millions of dollars, decisions that had been taken in my absence and without any coordination or consultation with me.

The last straw that broke the camel's back came when the minister took the negotiations with foreign construction companies out of my hands. One day, a ministerial aide, Qobi Katz, came into my office and handed me a note on which Sharon was informing me that he was relieving me of dealing with both the foreign companies and the prefabricated housing companies. He began to handle those areas personally. The outcome was a network of commitments amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars, which contributed more than a little to the budget deviation mentioned by the state comptroller.

I thought at the time and now it has been demonstrated, that a controlled process would have helped resolve the housing problem without wasting public money the way it was wasted. In complete opposition to my recommendation, the ministry placed orders with companies for twice or three times as many prefabricated houses as were needed at the time, without even considering whether those companies were capable of keeping up the rate and volume of work they had taken upon themselves. To the best of my knowledge, to this day the ministry has not managed to get out of that mess.

I was also neutralized regarding negotiations with foreign companies on grounds that I was too slow signing contracts and that I was splitting hairs too much. At that

time dozens of representatives of construction companies were pouring into the country in response to David Levi's appeal, and major companies were coming and going at the ministry in hope of a deal. Those were serious companies, with a professional record and financial backbone, which invested millions in the negotiations process. One French company, for example, was backed by a \$500 million guarantee from the French Government. In the end deals were made with three other companies, after I left.

Quite by accident it turned out that each of the three companies that won were one way or another connected with people close to Sharon. One was an American company connected to Ya'akov Nimrodi, another was another American company that was brought to the Housing Ministry by Danny Derekh, who was Sharon's director general at the Ministry of Industry and Trade (Derekh, by the way, said he got no kickback), and a Yugoslav construction company, during the negotiations with which two old acquaintances of Sharon's appeared on the scene, Att. Gabi Kohen and arms trader Norman Shkolnik. During Sharon's term in office as defense minister, Shkolnik and Kohen played the starring roles in the Skyhawk deal with Argentina, a deal that almost dragged Israel into a conflict with the United States; it took the Defense Ministry years to sort out that mess.

There is a group of businessmen that has been accompanying Sharon like a wandering circus, through fire and water, as they say. When Sharon was at the Defense Ministry, they dealt in arms; now that Sharon is with the Housing Ministry, they are in construction. Should he get to the Environment, they will no doubt take up hot air business.

[Levitzky] The issue of the building companies was featured in the report of [State Comptroller] Judge Miriam Ben-Porat, but the juicy portion of it was especially devoted to the issue of bonded companies [hevrot meshaknot]. I asked Oren how it happened that every nobody got permission to become a bonded company without any criteria or verification.

[Oren] When I came to the Housing Ministry there were about 70 bonded companies and the definition of a bonded company was very sharp and clear. Not every contractor has the contacts and experience to become one. For years the ministry kept this a very exclusive club, and justly so. This became very important especially in our time, when the ministry took upon itself commitments to purchase housing.

Then came an unequivocal instruction from Sharon, an arbitrary instruction, to go from 70 to 500 bonded companies within a short period of time. Amid such a hasty process and under heavy pressure from the minister, all the professional criteria went by the wayside and the outcome is what the State Comptroller put in her report.

[Levitzky] Explain to me what you mean by "heavy pressure from the minister?" How did it manifest itself in practice?

[Oren] There was one scene that recurred maybe 20 times. We would be in a management forum with the minister, and he, in his peremptory way, would demand that we increase the number of bonded companies and demand explanations when the speed did not seem satisfactory to him. "What do you mean, only 300?" he would shout. "We need 500!"

This scene was repeated all the time and it was impossible to withstand the pressure. This is how all the criteria were broken, the system collapsed, and the field was penetrated by people with no suitable qualifications. We are talking about countless tiny building companies owned by Central Committee members and their relatives, who exerted great pressure to have the ranks opened up. The State of Israel paid a very high price for that. I personally felt it on my own skin. People came to me and asked, in the name of the minister, to make it easier for them and to authorize this or that company to become a bonded company.

[Levitzky] And you did?

[Oren] Sharon very quickly realized that I was not a "horse stealing" partner, and so did the dozens of big wheels who were running around the ministry. In the beginning I came into conflict with them, but soon they disappeared from my immediate proximity and went to camp around the minister's office.

At that point Arik needed to find other channels at the ministry through which to achieve his political interests. Much to my regret, some of the people who cooperated with him in what I call the "twilight zone" may now have to pay for the state comptroller's report.

[Levitzky] Describe to me a typical working day with Arik Sharon.

[Oren] Everything was done with great force and the entire ministry suffered under that, not only I. Many of the meetings were held without any prior preparation and engendered skewed decisions. As I was having difficulties adjusting to this system, I found myself increasingly left out of meetings with the minister and the process of separation between us began.

To my mind, one-on-one meetings between the minister and the director general at least once a week are a vital condition for the smooth operation of the ministry, especially at such a stormy time. I can count on the fingers of one hand the times we met throughout my term in office, and even then, it was not a discussion, but one long Sharon monologue. This minister was a decision factory.

The name of the game was making decisions. In the morning he would decide one thing and in the evening another. A climate of chronic uncertainty and instability was created. Every decisionmaking system worked in an

atmosphere of hysteria and action preceded thought and planning. I had a very difficult time trying to accept this style.

[Levitzky] It seems that one of the more prominent outcomes of the atmosphere you describe was the superfluous purchase of caravans and mobile homes, which cost the state a great fortune. As far as I remember, you were an enthusiastic party to that decision.

[Oren] The ministry did not even begin to have an idea of how many housing opportunities existed in the country. The decision to buy caravans in such numbers and at such a cost was the outcome of a wrong estimate of the scope of the immigration and of our staying power. Everything was a result of that hysteria.

Much to the credit of the professional level at the Finance Ministry, during that entire period they fought tooth and nail to insert a saner note into the panic. I have to admit that I, too, was swept up in that hysterical atmosphere and did not oppose either the concept or the volume. I was a party to and I did not oppose the unbridled construction in the Negev, either. There, too, I was swept up by Arik's passion for action, which I confess is hard to resist.

[Levitzky] Last April Oren finally left the Housing Ministry—in great torment, according to him—and became a partner in a company that manages building projects.

The rumor about you is that the company you joined has good connections with the Housing Ministry.

[Oren] The other partners in the company are old friends of mine. Consequently, while I was director general of the Housing Ministry I was careful not to give them any work contract, despite the fact that in some cases they were recommended by the head of the central district at the ministry. The company in which I am a partner has no contract with the Housing Ministry.

[Levitzky] There was talk of a nonprofit organization whose construction project you are managing and to whom you allocated land when you were at the Housing Ministry.

[Oren] We are managing the project of an orthodox nonprofit organization for building a settlement called Qiryat-Sefer. I recently found out that the present management of the Housing Ministry tried to smear me in this business. It turned out that the new director general of the ministry, Arye Bar, said at a public meeting that I allegedly allocated the land to this association just before leaving the ministry.

One letter from an attorney smothered that rumor in its cradle. The facts were as follows: This was not a matter of land allocation, but of a private purchase, which occurred one year before I came to the Housing Ministry. Moreover, the company in which I am now a partner began to manage the Qiryat-Sefer project before I left the Air Force. Anything else you may hear in this connection is a gross slander.

Anyway, since my departure I became a real persona non grata at the ministry and even my customers are not given the red carpet treatment there, to say the least.

And another thing. Every since I came into office at the Housing Ministry and since I left it I have not been approached by anyone, not in writing and not in person, not on the phone, and not even a little note, not from the State Comptroller's Office and not from any other source. I was not asked one question. You must keep in mind that this inspection report concerns the period in which I served as director general of the Housing Ministry, but the comptroller had no complaint against me.

[Box, page 5]

Sharon's Office: Oren Was Fired Because of His Nonperformance

Minister Ariel Sharon's office reacted by stating: "Obviously a ministry employee who was fired because of his serious failure to perform will now attempt to lay the blame on others. The scope of the chaos that Oren created was discovered only when the new director general, Arye Bar, came into office.

It is strange that a man like Oren, who at the end of his term went directly to work with companies to which he awarded peculiar privileges—in itself this circumstance deserves to be investigated—allows himself to go public with this kind of lies and falsehoods. What is worse, Amiqam Oren even awarded unusual privileges to various bodies in which his present partner was project manager.

Syria 'Hoodwinking' U.S. on Jewish Emigration

TA4045174992 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew
4 May 92 p 1

[Excerpts] Diplomats in the Syrian embassy of a major Western capital said at the end of the week that they do not know of any change in policy on Syrian Jewish emigration. The task forces for Syrian Jews in the United States and Canada also report that a week after the publication of the news that Jews will be allowed to depart from Syria, there is still no apparent practical possibility for their departure. [passage omitted]

According to Jody Pallad-Karr, chairwoman of the Canadian task force, no permit has been given Jews to leave on visits. The Syrian secret police (the "mukhabarat") summarily rejects all appeals, and those who do leave pay large sums as bribes for a Syrian passport with a one-time exit visa good for only one country, the U.S. or Canada. "Publications of families that have left are total lies. Those who have arrived are ill, and their arrival was organized a long time ago. Last night a cancer patient was due to arrive for treatment in New York, and I fear that simpletons will see in this a symbol of emigration and the good will of the Syrian administration authorities."

At the same time senior American administration officials who met recently with Jewish activists in New York, expressed much displeasure at the Jewish reactions to the reports from Damascus, by which Jews who appeal for exit permits are refused them by the secret police. The current view in the administration is that criticism of Syria by Jewish activists is too early and unjustified at this stage.

A major New York Jewish activist, involved in pro-Syrian Jewry, was told on Friday that the administration does not see criticism of Damascus favorably, and he was asked to desist expressing his views publicly on the matter.

In a briefing to Israeli and Arab correspondents in Washington, a senior administration official clarified that the United States expects the full implementation of the Syrian decision. According to the official, Syria must be given a period of a few weeks to set up for the implementation of the process of issuing exit visas to the Jews. "Let us give the Syrians some time," said the official.

However, within the Syrian Jewish community in Brooklyn the feeling is growing that the authorities in Damascus do not plan at this stage to implement the decision, and at best a few weeks will pass, perhaps two months, until the organizations who deal with it will be given instructions to ease the emigration of Jews.

A Brooklyn Jew whose married sister left Syria three years ago for medical treatment, related yesterday that his brother-in-law, who remained in Syria, attempted last week to submit a request for an exit visa to the secret police in Damascus, but was told he should return in a few of months.

The assessment in the community yesterday was that Damascus is hoodwinking the American administration. Many were also critical of THE NEW YORK TIMES, which two days ago published a lead article, from which it transpires that Syria has already implemented the decision regarding the issuing of exit visas to Jews.

Activists in Brooklyn complained that Syria is enjoying favorable coverage in the media and is collecting points in American public opinion, whereas there are no signs on the ground for a change in emigration policy. They believe that Syria wants to extort money in exchange for granting exit visas and is also hoping for political compensation. [passage omitted]

LEBANON

Minister Nabih Birri on Amal, National Issues

92AE0369A Beirut AL-SHIRA' in Arabic 23, 30 Mar 92

[Two-Part Interview With Amal Chairman Nabih Birri by Hasan Sabra and Zayn Hammud; place and date not given: "In Total Statement of Account on Amal, Birri Says: 'This is My Program for Change; If I Don't

Accomplish It, I Will Resign; I May Resign From Amal Chairmanship, But Not From Movement; Amal's Main Drawback Is That Masses Greater Than Organization; We Are Only Ones Who Flew Lebanon's Flag Next to Our Banner; We Led Resistance From Bayadir Saff al-Hawa to Present Position. This Is Greatest Victory; 6 February Altered Many International Resolutions; Because Plot Against Lebanon's Unity Involved Many Parties, Amal Had To Fight on Many Sides; Wherever I Took Charge of Security, I Did So in Spite of Myself; If Amal Didn't Exist, Lebanon's Map Would Be Different Today; If Movement Were Led by Somebody Other Than Me Since Early 1980s, It Might Have Ended; Movement Ended Shi'ite Political Feudalism. Shouldered Burden of Lebanon's Unity"]

[23 Mar 92 pp 15-20]

[Text] Between yesterday and today, an articular moment plants itself firmly in Lebanon's history by virtue of the changes that it has harbored and it continues to harbor—changes dictated by the shift from the state of war to the state of peace or, at worst, to the state of no-war.

These are comprehensive political, social, and economic changes. The first to be affected by them are not only the Lebanese citizens, who have been relieved of the horrors of war and of its fatal and devastating shrapnel, but also the forces, organizations, and parties that had their word in the battlefields and war theaters. Some of these forces have retreated and some of their powers have receded, and they couldn't have receded if it weren't for the al-Ta'if Accord, which has been given Arab and international support.

In what condition are these forces, organizations, and parties now? Has peace put them on the brink of extinction now that the halted war has put them in a state of retreat and decline? Or will the new Lebanese phase belong to them, as the previous Lebanese phase belonged to them?

Amal Movement is one of these forces, organizations, and parties. Rather, it is a leader among them, especially since Amal had its marked role in battles that erupted throughout the past years, since it left its impact on those battles, and since it influenced and was influenced by them. Amal Chairman Nabih Birri says that this is a price that had to be paid in order to preserve Lebanon's unity, to liberate its soil from Israeli occupation, and to accomplish political reform in a way that contributes to alleviating destitution.

Minister Birri has talked in detail to AL-SHIRA' about Amal Movement, presenting a complete statement of account going back a long time. To be specific, it dates back to the period in 1980 when he became Amal chairman. Birri has dealt with all the accusations made against Amal and with Amal's role, responding to what some view as "black spots" in Amal's procession and what Birri considers to be a source of pride, considering

those spots led to "confronting the Israeli-U.S. line and to foiling the plot to partition Lebanon."

In a lengthy "weekend" interview with Birri, the Amal chairman looked like a runner moving toward the future, not because of his complete jump suit which covered him from head to toe but, because of the program he has presented for Amal's activity in the coming phase. He has presented this program with an interesting enthusiasm that borders on defiance and that has made Birri pledge to give up the movement's chairmanship if he fails to implement the program that seeks to return Amal to its roots, thus embracing Lebanese from all sects in the peace phase, or the "greater jihad" phase, as he calls it.

Let us proceed to the interview:

[AL-SHIRA'] You assumed Amal's chairmanship in the spring of 1980. Now that 12 years have lapsed since then, what have you accomplished for the movement?

[Birri] To be truthful, the question is big and broad and you must direct it to somebody else, considering that one cannot evaluate one's self. In any case, the evaluation of any political, organizational, or dynamic activity must be viewed within the context of the geographic framework and of the events that took place. In some cases, one struggles just to keep "something" extraordinary alive.

I actually assumed the honor of the responsibility of Amal's chairmanship on 4 April 1980. Only five days later, condolences were being accepted for martyr Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, who had been killed by the Iraqi regime. Two days later, problems and battles erupted between us and the pro-Iraq Ba'th in the Lebanese arena. The problems, and the interactions to those problems in the Lebanese arena within the framework of the Arab Liberation Front, continued until the Israeli invasion in 1982. "People" then disregarded all those problems and confronted the invasion. You are aware of Amal's role in confronting the Israeli invasion. Perhaps for the first time in Lebanon and the region, Israeli enemy tanks and vehicles were confronted and captured. The movement continued to resist until it liberated a large part of the south's population and until it pushed back the Israeli enemy to the positions in which he is found now.

[AL-SHIRA'] The fact that your assumption of Amal chairmanship coincided with the confrontations with the pro-Iraq Ba'th makes us wonder if you came to confront those Ba'thists?

[Birri] No. Let me put you in the picture that existed at the time. Actually, I assumed the chairmanship on 28 April 1980, and the battles were in progress then. It so happened that a demonstration proceeded from the southern suburb and the pro-Iraq Ba'thists opened fire on it. One person was martyred and two were wounded, and battles erupted as a consequence. I arrived in this climate. It should be noted, however, that Amal didn't have a single center at the time and didn't have any

organizational, military, or material framework. I recall that we did not even have a room in which to meet at the time. We had one room in al-Zahra'. We then got ourselves another room, and then a hall. Prior to 1982, the PLO controlled all positions.

[AL-SHIRA'] If you had not assumed the movement leadership at the time, would Amal have been able to turn into a fighting military movement which confronted the pro-Iraq Ba'th first, then Fatah, then Israel, and so forth?

[Birri] I cannot say yes and I cannot say no, because numerous aspects of the popular movement influenced Amal. For example, the battles waged against the pro-Iraq Ba'th, the Palestinians, and other parties developed after these parties had clashed with the popular status quo. What I mean is that the popular movement made the decision, and then Amal embraced the decision because it represented the people. Let us be honest to history in this regard.

Numerous decisions were made in this manner. However, it was not an easy thing to manage the situation. If I wanted to brag, I could say that I believe that Amal could have ended if its chairmanship had been assumed by somebody else, because the battle with the pro-Iraq Ba'th was not with that party alone, but also with all the Palestinians under the guise of the so-called Arab Liberation Front.

[AL-SHIRA'] So you were chosen to lead Amal, with its condition and its course at the time, in a confrontation against the aforementioned situation?

[Birri] Why? Was Amal founded in 1980? Amal was founded earlier.

[AL-SHIRA'] The confrontation and the fundamental transformation in Amal movement began with your arrival. The movement, which had not been able to secure a room, as you have said, was turned into an army.

[Birri] And what would you do with the six years preceding my assumption of the chairmanship? One gets hungry [from fasting] in Ramadan, but one cannot eat away six years. What do you consider the period from 1974 to 1980?

[AL-SHIRA'] What do you call it?

[Birri] The movement-founding period. Amal was not created for a military purpose. If you examine Imam Musa al-Sadr's statements, you will find that he said that the militias would destroy Lebanon. Imam al-Sadr was opposed to militias and isolationism, and he was against internecine fighting.

[AL-SHIRA'] In spite of this, all these things happened under your chairmanship.

[Birri] No, they happened during the imam's time, prior to my arrival. The imam created the Lebanese Resistance Battalions to carry out acts of resistance against Israel. He was compelled to proclaim the Lebanese Resistance Battalions—Amal in the wake of the explosion at 'Ayn al-Bunayyah in 1975. Internecine fighting, attacks, and killing on the basis of the identity card [which identifies one's religious sect] started. Many years before Nabih Birri's arrival. Imam Musa al-Sadr was compelled to defend the lines of al-Shiyah [suburb] and others. At the time, we had military positions there. We were forced to join the domestic sedition because we had to defend ourselves and our existence. Let us speak frankly: the problems with the Palestinians, and the attacks by some Palestinians started years before Nabih Birri's arrival.

Imam Musa al-Sadr lived here and departed from here. He went to the home of the late Ahmad Qubaysi and the weapons of his aides were taken away from them. He then moved to the home of then Deputy Husayn al-Husayni, from there to (Alouette, al-Alwit), and from there to Syria. They would not let him stay in Lebanon. All this happened prior to 1978. Where was Nabih Birri then? This is in addition to the attacks by some leftist parties on the imam and on the popular movement, not to mention the position taken by the regime, the government, and the isolationist factions toward Imam al-Sadr, and the armed elements that were employed to cover the rallies to which Imam Musa al-Sadr invited the Movement of the Dispossessed, of which I was a part. Why did all this happen?

One cannot separate this aspect from the later history. When I took over, there was a real legacy in this regard. I can even tell you something else: The endeavors to split Amal with ideas which claimed to be more religious than Amal didn't start when Nabih Birri became chairman. One time, the imam formed a political bureau under my chairmanship because I insisted that the Movement of the Dispossessed had to be independent of the Shi'ite Council, meaning that there had to be organizational separation of the two. Thus, the movement would not be part of the Shi'ite Council, because it must belong to all the dispossessed in Lebanon. This is the line that Imam al-Sadr sought and the line that I led, side-by-side with Imam al-Sadr. At the time, I requested that the Political Bureau of the Movement of the Dispossessed get an office separate from the Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council's premises. After strenuous efforts, we managed to get the office of the Social Struggle Organization near al-Barbir. At the time, Imam Musa al-Sadr decided to form a political bureau other than the political bureau that he headed, and I later became chairman of the second bureau. The imam appointed me chairman. This bureau consisted of 10 members, including two or three members from the so-called Muslim Students Federation, which became the nucleus for the other Islamic movements that have opposed Amal.

I came and carried this legacy, whether military or connected with the civil war, after a period of void that

was not at all in my interest. Imam al-Sadr had dwarfed everybody with his stature and his personality. Suddenly, there was a void with his disappearance. In that condition, one was still learning from the founder or the leader how to crawl. In this state of feebleness and weakness, one found one's self compelled to embark on confrontation. One was faced with two options: Either declare one's end and disappear, or confront the plots that were being hatched all around one. A part of those plots concerned not Amal, but the Shi'ite sect and southern Lebanon, because, very regrettably, its affiliation was Shi'ite. But recently, I have noticed that there is a change.

One had to make a choice: Either capitulate or confront. Based on the imam's line, and not on my own opinions, I felt that Amal shouldered the duty of liberating the soil and the citizen. What I mean is Amal's duty toward the south, its duty to eliminate destitution among the Lebanese, and its duty to abolish political sectarianism. This is why battles were launched and plots were hatched against this line, which wasn't in harmony with the lines of all those who were involved in the plot at the time.

Continued Resistance

[AL-SHIRA'] What do you think you have accomplished?

[Birri] The first accomplishment is that I carried on with a fundamental message, insofar as liberation is concerned. What I mean is that I have led or, so as not to exaggerate, I and my brothers in Amal have contributed to leading the resistance movement that the imam founded in Bayadir Saff al-Hawa to its present position. At least, we enabled martyr Muhammad Sa'd, a son of Amal Movement, to create during the 1982-1984 invasion a liberated zone within the occupied area. This is the zone we called the Zone of the Villages Suspended in Heaven. By the admission of the Israelis, the latest of which was the admission made when Begin died, the reason for Begin's isolation was the losses he suffered at the hands of the resistance in Lebanon.

This was the first real victory to make the Lebanese, even Arab, citizen assert that the resistance can confront Israel. This line continues to exist.

The second accomplishment is that we have been able to eliminate or remove Shi'ite political feudalism. I have not been able to remove all political feudalism in Lebanon, but I have been able to remove Shi'ite political feudalism from the political arena. It is no coincidence that when deputies were appointed from the other sects, sons were appointed in all sects, excluding the Shi'ite sect, to inherit from their parents and their fiefs. The credit for this, too, goes to Amal.

[AL-SHIRA'] But this was appointment, not election.

[Birri] Appointment is the reflection of a general political condition. One cannot appoint an employee if he does not have political weight behind him.

The third accomplishment is that Amal has been able to impose numerous issues in order to develop the regime. Regrettably, we have not seen what we would like to see. But I wish to note that elections before concord was a concept projected by Amal, that the position against isolation (of the Phalangists) was a position taken by Amal. People have now revived these concepts. The assertion that concord is part of fighting Israel is also a concept projected by Amal. I am the one who launched the slogan "I agree 100 percent to see a Maronite army go to liberate the south." I have always wagered that the Lebanese Army would develop in a direction that will take it back to its genuine Arab character and prompt it to defend the south. This was Amal's projection and this is what has materialized. Dispatching the army to the south and making the responsibility for security a Lebanese, not Shi'ite, responsibility is an idea that was projected by Amal. The continued presence of the UN emergency forces, at least as a witness to, and a hope for, the implementation of Resolution 425, has come as a result of defensive positions and blood paid by Amal Movement. I can tell you even more with fewer words: If Amal wasn't present and if it hadn't struggled from the time it was founded, especially since 1980, you would have a different map for Lebanon. Without any exaggeration, Lebanon in its well-known form would not exist. Perhaps Amal is the only movement, or so-called militia, to fly Lebanon's flag next to its banner, whereas the other militias flew their own flags. All the projections offered by the others have been either smaller or bigger than Lebanon, encompassing either secular radicalism or religious radicalism, with the exception of Amal, which has been able to say with faith and belief in Islam that Lebanon is a final homeland. The first to utter the phrase "eternal homeland," which is stipulated by the constitution now, was Imam Musa al-Sadr.

The question could have been more precise if it were phrased as follows: What would have been done to Lebanon if Amal had not done what it has done? This is my conviction: Amal still has a role to play, beginning today and not tomorrow. This is a totally different role, and it is embodied in returning to its roots. If Amal fails to carry out this role, it will have betrayed its message, even if it does not mean to. What I mean is that Amal should belong to all Lebanese factions, should carry on with its democratic struggle and should, at the same time, strengthen the resistance. In other words, Amal should return to the proclamation made by the Movement of the Dispossessed—a proclamation signed mainly by non-Shi'ites.

[AL-SHIRA'] Are all the accomplishments that you have talked about worth the sacrifices that have been made, the destruction, the losses, and the blood that has been shed?

[Birri] I have given you a general idea of the accomplishments. As for the other accomplishments, one is ashamed to praise one's self, regardless of how vain one is. He who praises himself bids you farewell. If I told you

that Amal has created educational institutions that surpass the al-Maqasid and al-'Amiliyah [charitable] institutions put together, you would not believe it.

[AL-SHIRA'] Where?

[Birri] In all parts of the south and in al-Biqā'.

[AL-SHIRA'] For example?

[Birri] The Tul Educational Institute, which can accommodate nearly 4,000 students. It has been in operation for two years and it has 1,000 students now. The establishment's vocational branch has not been opened yet. We also have al-Bisariyah Institute, which can accommodate 4,500 students in a single school. This institute started operating this year and I believe that it has 700 students now.

There is also the Muhammad Sa'd Institute, which can accommodate the same number and which will start operating next year, and al-Hirmil Institute, which is under construction and which will accommodate nearly 2,000 students.

As for health centers and the construction of major hospitals or clinics, no less than 27 centers have been established. The same applies at the sociological and developmental levels in the south. What I mean by the sociological level is how one can wrench one's right from the government, whether in terms of roads, bridges, and water, through the Ministry of Southern Affairs and the Southern Council.

Prior to Amal, nobody could say that the government should pay a salary to the resistance or that the government should allot a stipend for detainees imprisoned in Ansar camp. These are points that I do not wish to mention. Some of these points have been accomplished and some are "progressing."

I made the decision to pay stipends to detainees and to the resistance as the minister for southern affairs. But it can be asked: What favor has Moses done his Lord? I was able to convince the Council of Ministers to adopt this decision unanimously last week. It was decided that the government should pay what the Ministry for Southern Affairs has been shouldering. In my opinion, this is the biggest victory. The sum that will be paid to the 300 or 400 detainees doesn't concern me. What is significant is that this government, which combines rightist and leftist parties and parties in between, has said unanimously: "Yes, we want to give to the detainees and want to support the resistance and the steadfastness of the south." The budgets are being studied. Special priority was given to strengthening the position of the Southern Council, even during austerity. It is true that the government has been inclined in this direction as a result of Syria's regional position and of the alliance with Syria, but Amal has played the fundamental, vanguard role by implanting this tendency in the people's minds. I believe that this is the greatest victory scored by Amal. Imam Musa al-Sadr ran from church to mosque and from

mosque to church to preach to everybody that the southerner was defending not just the tobacco seedling, but also the apple tree in Kasrawan. But nobody understood him.

[AL-SHIRA'] What is it that you have not accomplished in your 12 years of chairing the movement?

[Birri] I often ask myself why the movement has split into factions when all the people have supported it. I ask: Was it possible to avoid some things and some of the battles that broke out? One tasks one's self. For example, now that years have lapsed on the war in the camps and their vicinity, I and all people are now certain why that war broke out.

Only One Thing

[AL-SHIRA'] Is this one of the things that you have regretted?

[Birri] No, I have not regretted it. To begin with, the attack was not launched by Amal. It has become known now how this thing had been planned. All parties, both near and far, know that Amal was in the position of the victim who had to respond. We should keep in mind that what ultimately ended that war were my initiatives, not somebody else's initiatives, because the objective was for that war to continue.

The most important thing that has to be done now—and this is my obsession—is to expand Amal beyond the framework of its membership, which is mainly Shi'ite, to the framework of its principle, which belongs to all Lebanese from all sects and all denominations.

[AL-SHIRA'] When you assumed the Amal chairmanship, were there other goals in your program that you have not accomplished?

[Birri] No. This is the only thing, believe me.

[AL-SHIRA'] What is the thing that you have regretted—something, other than the camps war, which occurred but which could have been avoided?

[Birri] Nothing. Amal's history is a proud history, and I will tell you why. Because Amal has never been an aggressor. Check the statements of the people who engaged in battles with Amal. For example, there were battles between us and the Progressive Socialist Party. Check the statements of the party officials in both cases, especially the statements of brother Walid Junblatt who said: "I was wrong."

The 6 February uprising led to change in the entire region and influenced the course of events. I use this uprising as an example against those who say that an international resolution cannot be changed. I believe that 6 February changed a number of international resolutions, not just one resolution. I was with Mufti Shaykh Hasan Khalid, may God have mercy upon his soul, on 7 February and I told him: "Beirut is my national crown. But its security is a dirty shirt that I

don't want. Let us turn it over to the army." But the army was thought to be Shi'ite and it was rejected. The plot was connected with the security issue. Wherever I took charge of security, I did so against my wishes. When I say "against my wishes," I cannot be regretful.

Let me give you an example. When Israel was forced to withdraw in 1984, the majority of Palestinian and Lebanese nationalist leaders held a meeting in Damascus with Syrian Vice President 'Abd-al-Halim Khaddam to discuss the issue of who was to control the security of the south, from Sidon up to the border strip, keeping in mind that Amal was the fittest, that it was the foundation, and that it was the party that had nurtured the resistance. There was no other party in the arena because everybody had fled. Amal was moving its forces upward. Altogether, the tendency was for Amal to take control of security. I was the last to accept because I knew what taking control of security meant. Half the people are the ruler's enemy, and that is if he is just.

There was consensus, and I found myself compelled to take control of security because refusal to do so would have been tantamount to treason. Besides, to whom was security to be entrusted? At the time, even the PLO's power had been broken by the Israeli invasion. There were Palestinians but there was no Lebanese army and no internal security forces, not even Palestinian resistance. How could one let matters go uncontrolled when the people are one's people, when the kinsmen are one's kinsmen, and when one is responsible for the country, especially when one is the spearhead for liberating the country! So one was faced with a reality that dictated that one take control of security. Afterward, I told myself dozens of times that this step caused me a loss in the south, and it was one of the reasons for the battles with Hizballah. Is this not true?

But can I say that I was wrong, keeping in mind that a general Lebanese-Palestinian national decision was made, entrusting Amal with security. I took over security control. As a result, battles erupted with the Palestinians just one year later. The battles that broke out in Beirut were actually battles on the banks of Tyre, even though they took place here [in Beirut]. Also as a result, battles broke out with Hizballah two years later. Why? Let me remind you. One principle of the security of the people and of the south—a principle for which I am prepared to fight even now—is the principle of not attacking the UN emergency forces. Attacks were perpetrated against these forces and some of their members were kidnapped. Some people were inclined to expel the UN forces from the south while I was in charge of security. So, what could I do? There are things for which one has to pay the price. One cannot "pick the spoils and not pay the price." This cannot be done.

A simple example of this, an example which I do not even have to cite, is that there are now more than 14,000-15,000 Lebanese troops in the south. If history will record the truth and if it is only half fair, then it cannot but record many of Amal's positions with

immortal ink. So there are now 14,000-15,000 army troops in the south, backed by nearly 20,000 Lebanese troops who are also backed by Syrian support. The situation with the Palestinians is based on the government relationship with them. The same applies to Amal, Hizballah, and all the parties that called for and agreed on this army. Despite all this, there is talk about "goings and comings" and about how Israel enters and strikes while this army refrains from making any move to engage in defense. You are aware of the tunes that are being played over and over, to the degree that the latest Council of Ministers session held a debate on the smuggling of tobacco and of other goods in the south and the north. Throughout seven lean years, from 1984-1991, Amal took control of security without any resources or support from foreign countries, except for moral support and weapons from sisterly Syria. We had no police stations and no courts, and yet we didn't hear of one box of Marlboros being smuggled. I said to the Council of Ministers: "Add to this that nobody could smuggle a single beer bottle."

If Amal had not assumed this responsibility throughout seven years, what would have happened in the south? Where would the south be now? Would the south be under legitimate government control now? The answer is certainly not. A no for an answer means that Lebanon would have been partitioned. For Israel, one of the most significant links of the plot, of which we are aware, is the partition of Lebanon. Amal has carried the burden of Lebanon's unity. Because the plot against Lebanon's unity is big and involves numerous parties, Amal had to fight numerous parties, and this is what has happened. I do not regret many of the battles. One does, of course, regret the martyrs, the wounded, and the losses. But ultimately, one can see that one was able to stand fast and to enable his country to survive, at least. This is why I have maintained the same position from the time the al-Ta'if Accord was concluded til now, namely: I like the al-Ta'if Accord as a framework for Lebanon's unity, because it has preserved Lebanon. But within this framework, there is a lot to be done. What is this framework? It is the framework for an independent and united Arab Lebanon struggling against and fighting Israel. If you ask me if I am the number-one fighter against Israel in the south, I will tell you: No. If you ask me: Then who? I will tell you nobody, because all of Lebanon is fighting Israel. Diplomats and ambassadors abroad do not dare tell what was said in the past, keeping in mind that I have been opposed to Lebanon's participation in the [peace] conference from the outset. Who amongst our ambassadors abroad worked for Israel and who worked for Lebanon? The issue was confused. Now, even these people cannot speak the same language.

Now you can view the south as a Lebanese responsibility. This is what Amal has struggled for. Were it not for Amal, this would have never been accomplished. I have said to the Council of Ministers: The south is the only Arab card existing outside the capitulation table now. This is the only card that utters even the first letter

in the word "no." Why do you, the Lebanese, want to abandon this card? You say at one time that this country is responsible for this card, and another time that another country is responsible for it. When the Yatir and Kafra incident occurred, I was happy to see how ministers began to visit the south, even though others wanted to crack jokes at the ministers' expense. I was glad to see them go there, even if they went just for a walk with the army commander who was up there at the time of the battle.

[AL-SHIRA'] It is Amal's ambition to incorporate Lebanese citizens from all sects. Doesn't it behoove Amal to reinstate those who were in its ranks, beginning with the first political bureau and ending with the last person to leave Amal, namely its vice chairman?

[Birri] Yes, we have addressed invitations, even requests (he said jokingly), to these people. But they haven't worked.

[AL-SHIRA'] Should the issue end with one invitation, considering that 10 years have lapsed since these people retired to their homes?

[Birri] Take it easy. They have been in their homes for 10 years. Tell me, who made them sit in their homes?

[AL-SHIRA'] Who did?

[Birri] Ask them.

[AL-SHIRA'] You did.

[Birri] I have never expelled anybody from Amal, unless he abandoned it first. As for Amal's vice chairman, he continues to be an "honorable brother" in the movement.

[AL-SHIRA'] But he has resigned from the movement.

[Birri] Who is he?

[AL-SHIRA'] Colonel 'Akif Haydar.

[Birri] Who told you?

[AL-SHIRA'] He did.

[Birri] I have just found about it from you. Where did you read or hear this?

[AL-SHIRA'] He said to the entire world: "I have resigned from Amal."

[Birri] When?

[AL-SHIRA'] Seven months ago.

[Birri] If it is so, then he has done it. You see, he has left. I did not make him leave. I believe that if one feels that one cannot accomplish his objectives in public service, then one can resign. But I do not understand how one can resign from a principled commitment to which one has devoted one's self. If I, Nabih Birri, cannot accomplish what I wish to accomplish in Amal, I may resign

from the Amal chairmanship, but I will not resign from Amal. Things become known many years later. If we review the names of the brothers who have abandoned Amal, we find that each of them held a different belief. This is not prohibited. Differences occur within parties and Amal's organization has never been greater than its masses. Inversely, the main drawback in Amal is that its masses are greater than its organization. This is because Amal was born by cesarean. Before the organization could be weaned, its nurse maid was snatched away. We took over under those conditions, and we have never rested since. The latest congress is, perhaps, the first congress to be held in a semi-peaceful climate and far from domestic battles and the domestic grinder. The resistance is a different matter. This is why you find that a document has been issued by the congress. There is also a real, orderly movement for change and for bringing in a general secretariat in which all people are represented, as well as an organizational oversight committee that oversees and tasks Amal officials the way a parliamentary committee tasks officials, thus enabling Amal to attract not only veteran and new members, but members from all factions and all sects. If I cannot accomplish this now [changes thought]. In the past, I had a pretext. I used to say: "Under these military conditions, how could I think of such matters as how to convince Hasan Sabra, Tony, 'Umar, or Ilyas, or somebody else to come and work with me." Now, I find that this pretext no longer exists, and if I cannot accomplish this objective [of attracting all sects to Amal], then I am fully prepared to step aside.

[AL-SHIRA'] We will take you to task for this statement in two years.

[Birri] And I will let you know the results in two years, even earlier.

[AL-SHIRA'] The members of Amal's first political bureau were with Imam al-Sadr. What made them leave?

[Birri] You want to create a nonexistent problem. To begin, brother Chamber of Deputies Speaker Husayn al-Husayni, not I, was the person who took over the chairmanship when the imam disappeared. I was abroad then. However, I was appointed assistant secretary general and al-Husayni was appointed secretary general. They [Political Bureau members] were all present, of course, with the exception of those who had been martyred. Not one of them was removed, excluding Zakariyya Hamzah, who followed a different course, and Shaykh Na'im Qasim, who was not a shaykh at the time. He was in the General Secretariat, but departed at the time of Speaker al-Husayni because he had a different path. All those who were present when I took over are still present. You mean by your question the political bureau that existed in Imam al-Sadr's time.

[AL-SHIRA'] Yes, the figures that surrounded Imam al-Sadr. What made them leave?

[Birri] Not all of them have "left." Here, I wish to put you in the picture of Amal's physical structure. Imam

al-Sadr selected the Political Bureau members and called them a political bureau. There was no election, and the imam's justification was that the movement had not come into existence yet. Those selected included Shaykh Muhammad Ya'qub and myself—the imam appointed me political official, official spokesman, and representative to the progressive parties and forces. This was not the result of election, but of appointment. The selected also included Dr. Husayn Yatim, 'Akif Haydar, Malik Badr-al-Din, Fakhri 'Allamah, Husayn al-Husayni, 'Ali al-Hasan, and Husayn Kan'an. All these brothers were appointed. But organizational action at the base level was—and this is very important—independent, and the organizational official was martyr Mustafa Shamran. This means that the imam operated at two levels. At the top level, he selected people for the facade and at the base level, he worked to develop the organization. When the imam drafted Amal's constitution, he also established its rules of action. Is it a coincidence that Amal's first constituent conference was attended by only a few of the Political Bureau members?

[AL-SHIRA'] Was it held in Imam al-Sadr's presence?

[Birri] Of course. The conference was held in 1976. I believe. When action was launched, an organization was in place, there were people on the ground, there were branches and districts, and it became possible to hold an election. It was natural that the people whom Imam al-Sadr had appointed for a purpose in his mind would not succeed. As soon as the first election was held, 90 percent of those people vanished. Only I and Husayn al-Husayni remained.

[AL-SHIRA'] Did the base remove them?

[Birri] Yes, the organization did, and by election. So you cannot say that so-and-so or Hizballah was there at the time. An election was held and the General Secretariat of which I am speaking was elected. It included, for example, 'Atif 'Awn, who was not known at the "top level" because Imam al-Sadr put him to work at the base, not at the top. Of the cadres about whom I am speaking, none has left. As for the other brothers, if you wish to talk about brother Malik Badr-al-Din or brother Fakhri 'Allamah, you cannot say that they have or haven't resigned. You can say that they are among the veterans who stood side-by-side with the imam. But the truth is that they didn't work in the organization.

This issue is always emphasized in order to distort the movement, and I would like to clear it up. What I want to say is that none of these people belonged to the movement in the organizational sense, excluding Husayn al-Husayni, Shaykh Muhammad Ya'qub, myself, and 'Akif Haydar, who continued to be in Amal and whom I have been determined to keep in Amal. When he went to Saudi Arabia, I sent asking him to come back. I also kept Dr. Husayn Yatim and I was eager to keep Dr. 'Ali al-Hasan in the Political Bureau. I nominated them as candidates several times, but they failed.

[AL-SHIRA'] But you did not support them. If you had supported them, they would have won.

[Birri] No, no. This is another concept which I wish to correct. The Amal chairman, like any other chairman, has tendencies. But rest fully assured that I let elections take their course. In many cases, I do not attend them. In an election three years ago, I tried, and not for the last time, to intervene and bring about reconciliation in a certain province. I found that people there considered this effort to be intervention in province affairs and they said: "We are present but we are displeased." So I told them: No, do not be displeased. I will withdraw. I withdrew and didn't attend Amal's three provincial congresses, keeping in mind that it had been customary for me to stop by each provincial congress and deliver a word of guidance.

[AL-SHIRA'] Don't you give the impression that so-and-so should be elected and so-and-so should not?

[Birri] Never.

[AL-SHIRA'] Are people elected by chance?

[Birri] No, not by chance. I vote like everybody else. If somebody asks me, I draw his attention that so-and-so is a person whom we should bring in closer. But at times, somebody comes to me and says that he wants to be nominated as a candidate. I tell him that it is not up to me and that I am not opposed to him, and he may run for election and win.

[AL-SHIRA'] Meaning that there is no internal election machine that arranges the elections?

[Birri] If I wanted to intervene, I could. But the truth is that I do not intervene. I will cite Bilal Shararah as a simple example. In a previous election, I told Bilal to run for election. But I did not work for his election, of course. So he did not win. In the latest elections, I went home and rested when the elections started and got the results after they were announced. This is well-known. But to make the picture clear, I started following this course when I felt that the movement had been purged of impurities and that no [other] tendencies existed within it. Previously, I intervened very strongly in order to prevent any tendency from overwhelming the movement's tendency and because I was aware that there were tendencies that sought to topple Amal's tendency. But when the movement started reading from the same book, and this phrase [interrupted]

[AL-SHIRA'] Is from al-Ta'if?

[Birri] No, not from al-Ta'if. This phrase was coined by Husayn Kan'an, who said that we in the movement must read from the same book.

[AL-SHIRA'] Meaning that Husayn al-Husayni borrowed the phrase from Husayn Kan'an?

[Birri] No. To us in the movement, Husayn Kan'an is the one who coined the phrase. What I wanted to say to you,

of course, is that in the latest elections, certain people were elected to certain positions, whereas I wanted them in other positions.

[AL-SHIRA'] Such as Minister Baydun, for example?

[Birri] No. Minister Baydun is one of the most important and fundamental political elements in the Political Bureau. This bureau needs Muhammad Baydun's political ideas. Baydun is one of the most important political talents in the movement, and his position belongs to him. I want to ask: Who spreads these reports? Broadcaster Wardah asked me: Why have you dropped Muhammad Baydun? I told her that the person who won was Muhammad Baydun, not Muhammad Yusuf Baydun.

[AL-SHIRA'] It has been said that if it had not been for you, Minister Muhammad Baydun would not have won in the Political Bureau election.

[Birri] This is not true.

[AL-SHIRA'] If democracy existed in Amal, meaning that if decisions were made by a majority vote, it would mean that you have to intervene in order to bring in people who serve your interest. But if no democracy exists, then it doesn't matter who is elected.

[Birri] There is nothing but democracy in Amal.

[AL-SHIRA'] In Amal, is any decision made by the chairman with the prior approval of the Political Bureau?

[Birri] In Amal, there are statutes and there is a book and a constitution, and nothing is done except through them. This constitution spells out the powers, beginning with the powers of an element and ending with the powers of the Amal chairman. Amal's statutes have existed since Imam al-Sadr's time and they cover the principles of Amal's activity and the internal bylaws which deal with members, committees, and their classification, how they win and lose confidence and how they lose their organizational status. The bylaws also cover the general prerequisites for appointment, suspension, and dismissal. They also cover what the general congress is, who attends it, what its powers are, and who manages its sessions. Moreover, they cover the Central Council, spelling out what it is, how it is convened, and its powers, in addition to the Islamic Law [Shari'ah] Committee and the courts. The bylaws also cover how the Political Bureau is convened, what is its quorum, how it votes, and what its powers are. The bylaws also cover the Executive Council, its powers, and the powers of its chairman and of every one of its members, in addition to covering the Organizational Bureau, the Research Bureau, the general councils, the military forces that we have abolished, and so forth. Every year, proposals are made for amendments, and these proposals come from committees, not from individuals. This year, amendments and additions to the statutes were proposed by the committee preparing for the Eighth General Congress. These amendments are

added to and become a part of the statutes, which are adopted as a constitution for a period of three years.

[AL-SHIRA'] Was a vote ever cast against your will in the Political Bureau?

[Birri] Of course. Right now There is an issue in the Political Bureau that is no secret, namely whether some issues should be subject to secret balloting or open balloting. The Political Bureau held meetings on the question of ministers and of the appointment of deputies. But we are not prepared to submit a statement of account to the world every time the bureau meets. If somebody says that there is no democracy, then this does not mean that there really is no democracy. I have told you that there are "objectives" that I want to achieve, and that if I cannot accomplish them I will abandon the chairmanship. If I were a dictator, then the approach would be different.

[AL-SHIRA'] Were the names submitted to be appointed as deputies determined by the Political Bureau or by an initiative on your part?

[Birri] The Political Bureau made the decision. But principles were established and the movement chairman was authorized to choose. I told the bureau: "I do not wish to be authorized because you will authorize me now and say no tomorrow. Let us be frank. So you go ahead and nominate the candidates." They refused and they left it up to me. I said to them: "As long as you have authorized me, then let me tell you that I want two from al-Biqa' and one from the south."

[AL-SHIRA'] Were they all nominated?

[Birri] Everybody was nominated. But ultimately, a person can select one or two candidates, but cannot take them all.

[AL-SHIRA'] Why was 'Akif Haydar not one of the candidates?

[Birri] And why not Mahmud Abu-Hamdan?

[AL-SHIRA'] But one [Haydar] is Amal deputy chairman?

[Birri] This has nothing to do with it. The issue is not one of rank.

[AL-SHIRA'] Why would you give your trust to one and not to the other?

[Birri] Do you want to understand me or do you want to fight with me? First, let us consider, for example, who has been elected Amal deputy chairman.

[AL-SHIRA'] Ayyub Hamid.

[Birri] Fine. Why not Minister Mahmud Baydun or Deputy Mahmud Abu-Hamdan? This is an organizational issue and has nothing to do with the government. When I appointed Ayyub Hamid as general director in 1984 after a six- or seven-month struggle with Amin

al-Jumayyil, Hamid was not a Political Bureau member at the time. He was a province member. I did not say at the time that I would groom somebody who is "next to me." In the [General] Congress, all powers and ranks are extinguished—and this is very significant—and the Amal chairman becomes just the congress chairman.

Dr. Hasan Yusuf, for example, has been appointed the Southern Council chairman. He was not a Political Bureau member but member of the Executive Council. I ponder who the right person could be, I hold consultations, and the issue is discussed within the Political Bureau.

[AL-SHIRA'] Is this issue within your powers?

[Birri] No. The powers of the Amal chairman are spelled out in general terms. If you read the bylaws, you will find that they say that the chairman is the movement representative and spokesman, and that he heads all organizational levels. The chairman's status is spelled out in general, not specific, terms.

[AL-SHIRA'] Meaning that when you appoint Hasan Yusuf as the Southern Council chairman, then the issue is presented to the Political Bureau?

[Birri] Of course. Every issue is submitted to the Political Bureau. But generally, the bureau people say: "We do not wish to get involved with names. We authorize the brother chairman to make the appointment." The appointment made on the basis of the authorization may not please some people and may not please me. But this is what happens.

[AL-SHIRA'] If we wish to compare Amal's latest congress, i.e. the eighth congress, with the sixth congress held in the 6 February period, we notice that there is a difference between the two congresses.

[Birri] How?

[AL-SHIRA'] In terms of Amal itself, of its influence, and of the people's interest in the congress. Does this mean that Amal's star is waning and that, consequently, the movement is more of a war movement than a peace movement?

[Birri] No. As I have been saying, one has to measure any issue by its circumstances and its facts. This is true even when it comes to food and clothing.

One cannot wear a light shirt in bitter winter cold. Everything has its circumstances. Therefore, what does the congress following the 6 February uprising signify? What is the 6 February uprising? It was an uprising against the Israeli-U.S. line, against the Sixth Fleet and others, against the New Jersey and the multi-national forces. The truly daring and the truly brave are the people who fought from the ends of the north to the ends of al-Biqa'. Amal stayed in Beirut and certain leaders stayed in Beirut to lead the movement and to stage the coup against more than 12,000 troops who took part in the assault on West Beirut on 6 February.

The U.S. ambassador contacted us at the time to find out if it was possible to withdraw the U.S. troops from al-Wza'i, but not under Amal's banner. I told him: "I cannot promise you." In fact, the U.S. troops were withdrawn from al-Wza'i under Amal's banner. There was a 180-degree change of direction between 17 May and 6 February. When did President al-Jumayyil run to President al-Asad to tell him that he would abolish the 17 May accord? At the end of February, i.e., nearly 20 days after 6 February. At the time, numerous presidents wished they could meet with the Amal chairman. On the same day that French President Francois Mitterand had a 55-minute meeting with President al-Jumayyil, he held a 65-minute meeting with Nabih Birri. When asked about the fact, President Mitterand said that he is compelled to deal with people who make history.

[AL-SHIRA'] Who was the translator there at the time?

[Birri] The translator with whom? With Amin al-Jumayyil?

[AL-SHIRA'] No, with you. How good is your French?

[Birri] From what college did you graduate? Regrettably, I have graduated from no college.

[AL-SHIRA'] Your [second] language is English, not French.

[Birri] To the contrary, I gained both my English and my French in Africa, not from school. It seems that your ideas of Amal and of its chairman are deficient, even though you are close to it.

Now, most of the burden that was on Amal's shoulders is shouldered by the government, because there is a solution to the militias and to numerous other problems. The question posed now is: How well can we triumph in peace? We are now in the "greater jihad," as the prophet, may God's peace and prayers be upon him, said. Now I must ask: How well have I succeeded in the Industrialists' Union, the Doctors' Union, and the Engineers' Union? How well have I succeeded and to what degree have I failed? At the same time, one has to consider the resistance in the south, which reflects how strong one is and how weak one is. Circumstances are different now from what they were. In that period [of the sixth congress], Amal's congress was an international congress. Amal was the government, the entity, the army, and the whole universe here. Now, Amal is the popular organization. This is insofar as the first part of the question is concerned. As for the second part, yes, plans had been made for the [eighth] congress that has just convened. We started preparing for it five or six months ago. It wasn't planned to be convened here [in Beirut] but at least in the south, as in the previous time. We held the previous congress there because we have in our centers there halls that can accommodate 1,000-1,500 people. We invited the ulema to attend, in addition to the media and press people. The recent conference was, in truth, a popular conference and it had been planned for the same

this time as it was in the previous time. But the assassination of [Shaykh] 'Abbas and the attack on Kafra and Yatir, plus the elements, such as snow, compelled me to cancel the congress several times. This happened during my presence in al-Biqā' where I had been scheduled to meet with the people from al-Biqā' Province. But we feared a repeat attack during the meeting. Moreover, people could hardly manage to get to Beirut, not to mention the security issue. Three days before the scheduled date of the congress, it was decided to advance the date of the congress and to hold it on 4 April. We distributed the chairs all over the place [for security reasons] because this congress was being attended by all Amal leaders. This is no joke. We invited nobody other than the electoral assembly. Not a single journalist was invited to attend. We didn't invite any of the other parties, either. The reason is the hall which we used. Nearly 420 people attended the congress, whereas the hall could accommodate no more than 400 people. But I did not wish to wait until 5 April.

[AL-SHIRA'] Because you were expecting repayment for past political favors?

[Birri] No, but because of the month of Ramadan. We decided to hold the congress before the onset of this month.

[30 Mar 92 pp 16-21]

[Text] Here are the details of part two of the interview:

[AL-SHIRA'] You were not Imam al-Sadr's only close confidant. However, you are now the sole bearer of the banner of Imam al-Sadr's movement. How do you explain this?

[Birri] I was not the only close confidant. This is true. It is because the imam tried to bring all people closer to him. Why did the imam try to choose me? As to why God, may He be praised and exalted, gave me this opportunity and why the imam choose me for this responsibility, I do not know and I cannot give you an answer. The imam once talked to Speaker al-Husayni—and I am not aware if this fact is known or not—who was still a deputy at the time. He also talked to Husayn Qutaysh and Ahmad Isma'il and said to them: "We should persuade Nabih Birri to give up the law practice and devote himself to working with me." The imam's precise words were that I should be to him as Ilyas Sarkis was to Fu'ad Shihab, i.e., to be with him.

[AL-SHIRA'] As his secretary, of course?

[Birri] As his secretary and office director, and as an official concerned with the affairs of the Shi'ite Council and of the movement. The brothers told me that I would be given a salary. I went to the imam that same night and told him that I was at his service, but that there was no need for me to abandon my law practice. To the contrary, I declared that I was prepared to perform whatever was asked of me and that there was no need for

me, financially, to devote myself full-time to the assignment. I told the imam that I was prepared even to neglect my work or to assign other attorneys to take over for me. I objected to being placed within the framework of a certain job and said, moreover, that if I had to work, then it was my wish to work for the Movement of the Dispossessed only. I added that I did not wish to work in the Shi'ite Council, even though I and the imam were among its founders, because the council dealt with a totally different matter. As for Amal, it is like a son who has married, begotten his children, and cultivated his own companions, friends, and acquaintances, even though it had stemmed from the Shi'ite Council and from the imam personally.

[AL-SHIRA'] Amal's sole flag-bearer is not the only person in the institutions that continue to be associated with Imam Musa al-Sadr.

[Birri] Of course not. There is the Shi'ite Council and there are numerous other institutions.

[AL-SHIRA'] Why has no endeavor been made to combine all the institutions in a single pot with a single leadership, not necessarily of one person, but possibly a collective leadership?

[Birri] Imam Musa al-Sadr did not combine them within a single framework. Had he done so, there would have been no need to create them.

[AL-SHIRA'] There was a single robe [meaning Imam al-Sadr's robe]. Let the robe be created by a collective leadership. Isn't this possible?

[Birri] A collective leadership already exists.

[AL-SHIRA'] Do you consider it so?

[Birri] Not a hundred percent in the sense of the leadership that existed at the imam's time, but in the sense of the presence of coordination. Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi, Husayn al-Husayni, Shaykh 'Abd-al-Amir Qabalan, and the Amal Movement form among themselves an already-existing collective leadership. The current situation is not what it was in the past. Then, the decision-maker was one individual, namely the imam. He is not present now.

[AL-SHIRA'] Do you mean that the decision on any issue concerning the Shi'ites is coordinated in a quadri-lateral meeting and then applied?

[Birri] I am not claiming this. But when challenging issues crop up, a call for a meeting goes out almost all the time.

[AL-SHIRA'] You have always said that it is difficult to unite the Shi'ites behind a single position, and that the decision is supposed to be made and then imposed on the others. Do you still hold this opinion?

[Birri] I still hold this opinion.

[AL-SHIRA'] This means that you dictate your opinion to the others.

[Birri] When there is an urgent issue, one has to take a position and the others can choose [to accept it or not].

[AL-SHIRA'] Where is democracy, then?

[Birri] When an issue is debatable and when there is ample time. But in military matters, for example, there was no time to discuss and ponder. Else, the discussion and the debate would have never ended. Now, we have the appointments, for example, and one has the time and nobody is supposed to make exclusive decisions.

[AL-SHIRA'] Does this mean that there is coordination between you and the other leaders?

[Birri] Of course.

[AL-SHIRA'] Even with the other Shi'ite ministers?

[Birri] Naturally. As I have said in an interview with the Voice of Lebanon, what is being reported about an imminent date for the administrative appointments is not true.

[AL-SHIRA'] Assuming that this is done in a month or two.

[Birri] Even if it is done in a week, the appointments are supposed to be the result of constant consultative activity.

[AL-SHIRA'] But it seems, from what has been announced, that agreement has already been reached on the appointments and that what remains to be determined are the details and the names within each of the two baskets.

[Birri] What two baskets?

[AL-SHIRA'] One basket for the Muslims and one for the Christians, and they can select whomever they wish to select. The talk about names has already started. What is surprising is that there is coordination between you and Prime Minister Karami.

[Birri] I believe that these statements are inaccurate.

[AL-SHIRA'] But this has been announced in Tripoli by Prime Minister Karami, who has expressed his regret because the issue is an issue of sharing between Muslims and Christians.

[Birri] A single basket was supposed to exist for Muslims and Christians and it was supposed to include not only the administrative job positions, but also jobs in the public and joint establishments. It seems that what has been agreed upon for Muslims and Christians isn't final and that the agreement is on general principles. It also seems that what has been agreed upon are administrative jobs and jobs in the public establishments, i.e., jobs connected with Intra[bank] and the casino. These are issues that have not been debated or decided yet.

[AL-SHIRA'] This is insofar as Muslims and Christians are concerned. But insofar as the Shi'ites are concerned, have there been meetings between you and the other Shi'ite ministers?

[Birri] This is not the time for such meetings. The time for such meetings is when issues are decided. What has to happen? First, the question of "I love you or I do not love you" must be settled between Muslim and Christian. Regrettably, when this issue is ended, another session has to be held among the Sunnis, the Shi'ites, and the Druze. Similar sessions will be held among the Christians. This is a part of the country's makeup.

[AL-SHIRA'] And then comes the meeting within each sect?

[Birri] Yes. We will have reached the time for the meeting which you have so kindly mentioned. I will assure you before you ask me that as soon as I learned the early details of this story, I called for a quadrilateral meeting two days ago to find out what should be done about the names.

I Am an Arab Nationalist

[AL-SHIRA'] Your upbringing is an Arab nationalist upbringing. But you have lately found yourself leading a movement which the entire world has characterized as a sectarian movement, not in the sense of political criticism but in the sense of [interrupted]

[Birri] No, no. When you ask a "correct" question.

[AL-SHIRA'] You can say that it is an incorrect question.

[Birri] This is the first correct question.

[AL-SHIRA'] Are you in harmony with yourself within this framework? Had you continued to be an Arab nationalist, would you have been able to be the Amal chairman and to have the pleasure of meeting with Mitterand for more than one hour, as you have said, whereas the president of the republic [of Lebanon] couldn't spend as much time with him?

[Birri] Regarding my meeting with Mitterand, you should ask him if he enjoyed the meeting as much as I did. What does Mitterand signify? Mitterand is the president of France and this is why we respect him. I have cited the meeting just as an example.

[AL-SHIRA'] This is known and this [meeting] was one of the immediate consequences of 6 February.

[Birri] So the meeting was held as a result of my strife and struggle. Do you think Mitterand met with me just for "the beauty of my brown eyes?"

[AL-SHIRA'] Had you remained an Arab nationalist and had you not joined Amal, would this meeting have taken place?

[Birri] To start, I was not affiliated with the Arab nationalists in the partisan sense of the word. My affiliation is Arab, and I have been and continue to be an Arab nationalist. I have not changed a single iota because I do not change in such matters. One of the reasons I joined the Movement of the Dispossessed is that its charter spells out its Arab belonging. Had it not been for this, I would not have joined it. Imam al-Sadr was not from Honolulu, but from Shuhur. His belonging was Arab and he is from a family with such deep roots in Arabism that it is well known what al-Jazzar did to his grandfather and father, and how he displaced the imam's family.

On this basis, I worked in the movement to serve my country and Arabism. But then one was caught in the war by surprise. In this condition, one finds that "each ewe better join its herd or be hung by its ankle." This is what happened with all the parties, including the Socialist Party, the Phalangist Party, and all the other parties, excluding the Syrian Social Nationalist Party [SSNP].

[AL-SHIRA'] You mean the ideological parties?

[Birri] No, just the SSNP. As for the others, each has come to have his own religion.

[AL-SHIRA'] Including George Hawi?

[Birri] What I mean is that instead of the parties working to rally the sects behind them, the sects rallied the parties behind them. This affected Amal most. Why? because its leader and founder is a sayyid, i.e., a clergyman. He was a Shi'ite shaykh and sayyid, a Shi'ite imam, and the head of an Islamic Shi'ite council. The movement was inclined toward the dispossessed, the relative majority of whom are Shi'ites. The Lebanese war then came to undermine the south and to plot against it, responsiveness to the Shi'ite south has spread to most Shi'ite countries since ancient times. This is a historical issue. The credit for the observance of the principles of Shi'ism by Shi'ites all over the world goes to Jabal 'Amil [Mount Hermon], not vice versa. Besides, after the imam, Amal was headed by Speaker al-Husayni, a Shi'ite, and I, also a Shi'ite, followed him. This rallying behind the sect crystallized because of all these reasons.

I will sum up and say that Nabih Birri and the Amal leadership have tried to use the sect for the national interest and have not used patriotism to serve the interest of the sect. This is what I am trying to do to this moment. I am not concerned with what is said. When I resisted and sacrificed thousands of martyrs in the fight against Israel, I did not do it to build a Shi'ite state. When I fought on 6 February and at other times, I did not do it to build a Shi'ite state. If you only knew what inducements were offered to Nabih Birri in connection with the Shi'ite issue—inducements which I always rejected. We will offer here specific examples, and the witnesses to these examples can be asked, not because the statements need witnesses, God forbid, but just to reassure my heart.

During the talks in Lucerne, I was told on the peripheries of the talk: "Come, we will appoint a Shi'ite vice president of the republic." I turned down Amin al-Jumayyil's offer. This fact is known to everybody. On the sidelines of the conference, Shaykh Rafiq al-Hariri said to me: "Nabih, we will let a Shi'ite be the army commander." My answer was: "I am not fighting to appoint a Shi'ite commander of the army. I am fighting so the army commander will be a good man with a good standard."

I prefer Commander Emile Lahhud, the Maronite and son of a Maronite, because he is an honorable, clean, and good army commander. It is an honor for me that he is the army commander. He is much better than having a Shi'ite army commander who turns out to be a lemon. Why would I want such a commander? I say that as long as the question of sectarianism has been imposed on me and on Lebanon in its entirety, I have had to fight this battle with the sect in order to serve the homeland. I have never waged the homeland's battle to serve the sect. I will tell you that, very regrettably, people inside and outside the Council of Ministers drive you mad and make you a fanatic against your will. When people come and tell one that a Shi'ite is wanted for some position and that one has to select this Shi'ite, and when they reject one's right to select a Sunni or a Christian, then what can one say, keeping in mind that all hell will break loose if one does not select a Shi'ite. Let no one underestimate the Lebanese system. It is one of the worst and most bitter systems in the world. This system is one of the most restrictive systems. Whenever it senses a wind of change, it uses the sect, i.e., religion, and religious sensitivity is well known. By the way, I believe that one of the reasons for the Soviet Union's collapse is religion and the church, not bread alone. This is why the Lebanese system is one of the world's worst and strongest systems, because it is based on this sensitivity. It is to be noted that those who exploit this sectarian system the most are the least religious people. Experience has proven this. Inversely, a truly religious person is not sectarian, but a person who belongs to all sects.

[AL-SHIRA'] When Amal, with its domestic dimension, took over power as a militia, it assumed a sectarian character in Beirut. Meanwhile, Amal has an immense weapon that places it within the national framework, namely the resistance. To this date, you have not exploited this weapon well. You succeeded in arousing other sects against you when you established a militia and took control of Beirut. Even though you have a great national task now, you have not been able to change. Don't you think that a great task is awaiting Amal, namely the task of regaining its national status and attracting people to fight Israel in the south side-by-side with Amal and according to Amal's method?

[Birri] This is one hundred percent true, and I have already noted this in an earlier answer. On the day after the 6 February victory, I got in my car, and I recall this very well, and went to Shaykh Hasan Khalid and said to him: "I am a Beirut and I have lived in Beirut for 40

years. Beirut is my national honor, but Beirut's security is a dirty shirt that I do not want. I am here to tell you that this uprising is in your hands and that whatever you want regarding the army and other issues [will be done]. Please, get me out of this problem because on my way here, I encountered thousands of armed people, even though they were cheering for me. I beg you to help me in this matter." But the truth is that there had been a major decision not to help. Some of Beirut's leaders and others played a bad role. But this is not the right time to talk about this matter. It looked at the time as if the issue was a purely Shi'ite issue, keeping in mind that the Progressive Socialist Party, al-Murabitun, and other parties were here. I know that not all those who fought were from Amal. Sunni people from al-Bastah and al-Musaytibah and from all over the place came out with knives and joined us. The mufti's sermon on the holiday was a factor in itself. People recorded and listened to the sermons of Shaykh 'Abd-al-Hafiz Qasim. This was the result of a general climate. But Amal brought matters to a climax by endorsing and leading the uprising. I was there throughout the battle, and not just on 6 February. There is something that has been forgotten. In August 1983, six or seven months earlier, the army entered and took control of Beirut. It even entered my residence. I had formed a leadership for all the national parties and forces and I was holding meetings day and night for all the parties and their leaders. We met at a shelter. I recall that when they triumphed over us and stormed my residence, we did not have any weapons to confront them. At that time, all party representatives were at my place. After saluting, the officer in charge said to me: We have come in the name of peace. I said to him: "I congratulate neither you nor your Amin al-Jumayyil." However, I will plead for myself and say again that if I put up with this condition for a long time, it is because there were circumstances which prevented me from giving full consideration to change at a time when knives were falling on me from all sides and forcing me to defend myself. A hungry man was asked: How much is two plus two? He answered: Four loaves. Now I have this period of calm. If I do not manage to make the change—and I tell you this, knowing that I am honest with myself, at least, and honest with the others, God willing—that enables Amal to return to its roots, to embrace all Lebanese factions, and to create this broad current of change, beginning with the parliament and ending with the trade unions, then I am prepared to clear the way for somebody else while I continue to adhere to Amal's line.

[AL-SHIRA'] Have you not noticed that this is not the first promise you have made?

[Birri] I have never promised and failed to deliver.

[AL-SHIRA'] You once threatened to resign but did not resign.

[Birri] When?

[AL-SHIRA'] On 31 August 1990.

[Birri] Ha ha. God has abandoned you and let you fall. I have never committed myself to anything, not only before the people, but also between me and myself, without fulfilling it. It is now said in the political arena that what Nabih Birri says is reliable for no reason other than that I am honest with myself and honest with the people. On 31 August I said that these people have disregarded Imam al-Sadr's issue and I threatened to resign if they didn't make a decision on the issue and if they did not improve government performance.

[AL-SHIRA'] What do you say regarding liberation?

[Birri] Recently, a brother Lebanese ambassador asked me: "What is your opinion of the negotiations?" I said to him: "Do not mention these negotiations to those who are participating in them in 1992 or 1993. If anything is going to happen, it will happen according to Israel's conditions in 1994."

[AL-SHIRA'] When you decide to stand up and fight, do you ordinarily make your decisions after consulting people, or do you make your decisions and tell people "follow me?"

[Birri] Excluding the decision to fight Israel, I never decided to fight anybody until I was attacked first. History has revealed a great part of this truth and the remaining part will certainly be revealed in the future.

[AL-SHIRA'] Did you think that the Shi'ites wanted all that has happened in the domestic battles?

[Birri] Who has said that the Shi'ites wanted this. I am the proof. Nobody wants war for the sake of war. All our battles were in self-defense.

[AL-SHIRA'] And what about the battle with the Progressive Socialist Party at the (Beau Revage)?

[Birri] At the time, Walid Junblatt came to me and acknowledged that he had made a mistake.

[AL-SHIRA'] The other parties are wagering on Syria's withdrawal and are awaiting this withdrawal to embark on a new phase and regain their status. Was this issue discussed at Amal's congress, and to what degree will this reflect on your positions as a result of your alliance with Syria?

[Birri] Whoever thinks of this and wagers on it, whether he is in East Beirut or West Beirut, has not given up on his past schemes. Whoever talks of Syrian withdrawal now or in September continues to keep his schemes, and these schemes are either bigger or smaller than Lebanon. These words are final and I am responsible for them.

To me, the issue is not one of positions. Conversely, the Syrians fail at times, as a result of their action on the ground, to distinguish friend from foe. They may find that I am easier for them [to deal with] because they are certain that I create no problems for them. This is why they harass me more than they harass the others. This has nothing to do with Amal. When the Lebanese Forces,

Amin al-Jumayyil's army, the Israelis, and the Americans were strong, we feared for ourselves quietly. It is not futilely that Imam Musa al-Sadr said, and this is recorded in the charter: "You, brother revolutionaries, will be like roaring sea waves when you cease and end." It is within this context that I view the concord procession. There is no doubt that the al-Ta'if Accord underlines redeployment of the Syrian forces. If we discuss the accord fully from the legal aspect, we would find that this provision is mentioned in the political reforms section. This means that when the political reforms, including the abolition of political sectarianism, are completed, the Syrians are to withdraw. I see a unique situation. Our Syrian brother has come to help us regain our security and stability. The moment we are able to control our situation, security, and stability in Beirut, the Syrian should tell us: "Here is Beirut, [take it]." If we manage to do this in Mount Lebanon [Jabal Lubnan], the Syrian should tell us: "Take Mount Lebanon." The same goes for al-Biq'a', and so forth. Even though the fraternal Syrian presence is different from the presence of the occupying Israeli enemy, both countries are treated according to the same yardstick. I am not making claims, but giving facts. We are in March now, which means that only six months separate us from September. I must note that I have been demanding constantly and loudly at the Council of Ministers to expand recruitment so as to absorb the militias of which, regrettably, only the first part has been absorbed.

[AL-SHIRA'] How many troops has the army taken in to date?

[Birri] Two thousand troops.

[AL-SHIRA'] From Amal?

[Birri] From all the militias, including nearly 840 troops from Amal.

Militias Have Not Been Dissolved

[AL-SHIRA'] If this is true and if one knows it, then it is a catastrophe. If one does not know it, then the catastrophe is even greater.

[Birri] This is one of the reasons that make what happens at the Council of Ministers unknown. What is important is that, according to my information, the internal security forces have increased from 8,400 strong to 10,000 strong, meaning that there is less than one gendarme per square kilometer of Lebanese territory.

As for the army, my information is that it has grown to nearly 42,000-strong, of whom one should subtract nearly 14,000 administrators and technicians. Thus, the army is within the limits of 30,000-strong, of whom 15,000-16,000 troops are in the south. Have those who are pushing for Syrian withdrawal made calculations for security in the capital and the suburbs? These people cannot ensure this security unless they withdraw the army from the south. I wonder: Wouldn't this flow into the course of the plot? The second question is: When will

the Lebanese tell the Syrian to come back when the latter plans to withdraw even to al-Baydar?

Before all this, I say that the national forces in Lebanon should fight the Syrian, and I am using "fight" here figuratively, to keep him in Lebanon. I, Nabih Birri, will not hesitate to stage demonstrations against Syria if it plans to depart from Lebanon, because I know that it will be departing as the result of regional or international pressure, that this departure will destroy my country anew, and that it will reflect on Syria negatively. I call for demonstrating and standing against Syria if it decides to depart before it makes certain that the situation is stable. Why?

Because the Lebanese Government has been lax and Syria could have pressured it not to be. This issue must be made clear to everybody. They said: Let us disband the militias. It is a lie. The militias have not been disbanded. They said: We have collected the heavy weapons. But nobody other than Amal has handed over his weapons. Those who had the weapons, not the army, are still in possession of their weapons. There are people who had weapons which belonged to the army and they did return part of those weapons to the army, some damaged and some undamaged. Most of the weapons were not returned. According to my information, the Lebanese Forces continue to possess pursuit boats and heavy weapons that have not been completely handed over. They said: We want to gather personal weapons. But nothing more has been heard about this issue.

[AL-SHIRA'] Who are "they"?

[Birri] The Lebanese Government. This decision [to gather personal weapons], in addition to the bylaws of the Council of Ministers, is one of the decisions which I am constantly accused of criticizing. What is important is not just to make decisions, but to also implement them. No decision has been made and implemented.

[AL-SHIRA'] Heavy weapons have not been gathered? From whom?

[Birri] They have not been gathered from anybody other than Amal.

[AL-SHIRA'] How about the Progressive Party?

[Birri] The Progressive Party took part of its weapons to Syria, and this is known. The Lebanese Forces have handed over only a small part and have sold another part of their weapons abroad. They continue to possess a third part that is stored in certain sites and caches. God knows when they will pick up their weapons and rise against the country! Hizballah has handed over nothing.

[AL-SHIRA'] Do you fear another war?

[Birri] I do not fear it. I am completely certain that as soon as the Syrians withdraw under these givens and while weapons continue to be in the hands of the people, then the situation will be confused, perhaps between us and others. I have said that I do not like battles. But if we

are attacked, what can we do? Anyway, incidents are occurring daily, but nobody learns anything about them because there is a Syrian presence. A few days ago, fire was opened on some Amal members and the movement was nearly put on alert. But I asked Amal people to be patient.

[AL-SHIRA'] Where? In the [southern] suburb?

[Birri] On the peripheries of the suburb. Incidents occur and nobody knows about them. The papers have several pages speaking of problems and crime. In ordinary times, not to mention these times, the smallest crime leads to problems. This is why I have asked the army and the security forces if they can remain silent. Nabih Birri and Amal, which has always stood with the legitimate government, have not been given different consideration. As a militia, Amal has been treated the same as the others and the accusations directed at it are similar to the accusations directed at the others. Why did the first disagreement develop between me and the Lebanese National Movement, considering that my tendency is an Arab tendency? Was it for the sake of the civil administration of Beirut? The first battle between me and the ally closest to my heart and my situation was my battle with Walid Junblatt in the al-'Alamayn war. I wanted to hand over my weapons and to give my dough to the baker to bake it. I wanted to hand over my weapons to the army, but nobody agreed with me and nobody helped me with this issue. Only Amal can help the army and Lebanon. If the patient is convalescing now, then any setback will cause a recurrence of the coma, and God forbid, it will be fatal. The thing is to keep the army in the south, and it will continue to have a southern tendency. It is more important than food and drink that the army become 60,000-strong and the security forces become 25,000-strong, to which the United States will not agree. It will be a big mistake if Syria withdraws from Beirut or from other areas now.

Elections and Withdrawals

[AL-SHIRA'] What will you do if it does not agree to it?

[Birri] I am not talking of the United States, but of Lebanon. In the past, when the army planned to head south, the U.S. ambassador objected. I informed him, in the presence of the foreign minister, that the decision had been made and that what was needed was for him to help implement it as a superpower that could influence everybody. We had made a decision to deploy the army before 7 February. But it seems that nobody intended to send the army to the south. We are the only ones who gave the ambassador momentum. But when we asked him to support our plan, he said he would not. I told him that what was wanted wasn't support for the army, but to help the army be deployed.

What are the considerations in this issue? The first consideration is that Syria's security is part of Lebanon's security. The truth is that we do not hear these statements from the Syrians all the time. Before Syria's security, there is Lebanon's security. A part of this

security falls on the shoulders of Syria, which must continue to be present in Lebanon.

As to whether elections are held, my opinion is that "to hell with them, held or not." Amongst us, elections are like the marriage of the poor. Nobody is aware of it. The world is aware of the marriage of the rich. There is constant talk about Syria's withdrawal. They try to sweeten this bitter pill by saying that the Syrian presence should be redeployed so that the elections can be held. Darn it! Nobody asks: What about one half of the accursed south?" No elections should be held in Lebanon until Israel withdraws. Syrian withdrawal will then follow as a foregone conclusion. To demand Syria's withdrawal now is like a having a "thief" come to a home crowded with guests and demand that the house owner ask the guests to leave so he can rob it. Israel is present up there, as I have said in my radio interview. I begged them to tell me how the elections can be held when half of the south—1,207 square km—is controlled by Israel. Tomorrow, the whole 4,000 square km will be under Israel's control. Well, if they want elections on the basis of districts, then they have to explain to us how. If 'Abdallah al-Amin wants to run as a candidate for Bint Jubayl, then he has to put one foot in Marj 'Uyun, which is close to al-Suwwanah, and another foot in Tibnin. If we wish to appoint a deputy for that area, then he must be present there, of course. This means that he will inevitably have dealings with Israel. I cannot understand this logic.

[AL-SHIRA'] So there will be no elections before 1994?

[Birri] It will be for the good, God willing. You know that if we moved on just one side, we would have three deputies at least. Even if we limped, we would gain three deputies. I wish to ask, and I hope that they will enlighten me: How will this happen? Will they appoint deputies? Does anybody claim that he knows what shape the map of the south will take? Where will most of Jazin area fall?

[AL-SHIRA'] The talk is about districts now.

[Birri] What districts? 99 percent of Marj 'Uyun District is under Israel's control. Bint Jubayl is half and half, with the half beginning with Bara'shit and rising upward [under Israeli control]. The answer given is that there will be elections here and appointment there. How? What will distinguish the appointees from those who are present now? Will he who has drunk the whole sea choke on a little stream? Let those who have extended their deputyship for more than 10 years, and who now have the opportunity for another four-year term stay. Where is the catastrophe in this?

[AL-SHIRA'] Why are people talking so vociferously about elections as if they will take place tomorrow, keeping in mind that they are scheduled for the coming summer?

[Birri] It is my opinion that these expressions are voiced under U.S. pressure, which says that Syria must withdraw.

[AL-SHIRA'] Is it U.S. or French?

[Birri] U.S. pressure.

[AL-SHIRA'] The statements you made a little earlier, especially the statements concerning the existing weapons and militias, are economically scary.

[Birri] This is nothing new and everybody is aware of it. Should any ordinary problem develop when the Syrians are not there, you would find thousands of weapons.

[AL-SHIRA'] Are these words not frightful economically?

[Birri] These words are not only frightful but they also tear the heart. They cut off not only [the flow of] capital but also affluence and offspring.

[AL-SHIRA'] The prime minister has said that whoever spreads such statements is a conspirator.

[Birri] 'Umar Karami respects us and we respect him, and he knows from what angle my words come. At the Council of Ministers, he supported disbanding the militias and gathering the weapons. He spearheaded this issue. I want to say that if the Lebanese regime is eager for the Syrian army to be withdrawn, then there is a simple way to do it. First, let them pardon us and recruit large numbers into the army, even if there is Muslim-Christian disparity in the recruitment, keeping in mind that the al-Ta'if Accord says otherwise. What will happen if they recruit 15,000 troops? It seems that even in death we are not free of sectarianism. This [recruitment] is a matter of death. I wish to say, moreover, that people have the illusion that these statements are Shi'ite statements, that the Shi'ites will control the army as if they were a big majority, and that when such statements are made, they will serve the Shi'ite interest. I want it to be known that the number of Shi'ites in the Lebanese Army is smaller than that of others, precisely 2,000 troops less than the number of other Muslims. My information is that there are 12,731 army troops from among our Sunni brothers, 10,838 Shi'ites, and 3,031 Druze. This confirms that the Shi'ites are fewer in number. When we say this, we don't mean that the number of Shi'ites must be increased, but that 10,000 young men need to be recruited. I will say, moreover, that the number of Maronites in the army is bigger than the number of Shi'ites. These are facts, and I feel sorry when I mention them. This doesn't mean that I am defending the Shi'ite rights, but rather that others should stop lying to the people about recruitment and non-recruitment. The truth is that what is happening reflects failure, deficiency, and a grave error that is equal to treason. Let them create an army and let them recruit people for the purpose. If they create an army, the big

heads will disappear, especially since there is agreement on the security aspect and since the army's tendency is magnificent.

[AL-SHIRA'] There is a tune to the effect that recruitment to the army and the salaries paid to the recruits are the cause of the economic catastrophe. Do you consider such statements a plot against the army under the guise of protecting the economy?

[Birri] Why do they not mention the ministers' and deputies' salaries? Are these people working harder? Anyway, the issue is not one of salaries, but an issue of standard of living. What use are the salary raises they have given employees when they have done what they have done with currency inflation? The raise was wiped out before anybody could collect it. Officially, the minimum [wage] is 75,000 Lebanese pounds. According to the media, it has been raised to 120,000 pounds. So where has the increase gone?

Home in al-Msaylih

[AL-SHIRA'] Regarding your home in al-Musaylih, it is said that Husayn Ta'an has given it to you. It is also said that he has divided the land there and given you one plot and Shabib Khanafir another plot?

[Birri] For your information, Amal needs all the expatriate capabilities. Personally, I do not need any expatriate because, to begin with, I belong to an expatriate family. On the other hand, I personally built a home better than my al-Msaylih home in 1956.

[AL-SHIRA'] Where?

[Birri] In Tibnin. It is a very beautiful house and it cost me a fortune at the time.

[AL-SHIRA'] How much did it cost?

[Birri] Nearly 160,000 pounds at the time.

[AL-SHIRA'] Where did the money come from?

[Birri] I have already told you that we are expatriates and diamond merchants.

[AL-SHIRA'] So the money came from Africa?

[Birri] Of course. Where else? From Tibnin?

[AL-SHIRA'] It is said that you have businesses in the United States?

[Birri] Yes. In AL-NAHAR AL-'ARABI WA AL-DUWALI, Jubran Tuwayni credited me with 16 gas stations. At the time, I asked him to give me the gas and to keep the stations. The important thing is that it is known that Tibnin is located almost on the first contact line [with Israel] and the trip from here to there is tiring and takes time, especially when one is in a hurry and has appointments with ambassadors or others. This is why I need a home nearby, i.e., within an hour's drive. I need a centrally-located home. Initially, I bought a lot on the

shore in partnership with al-Hajj Ahmad 'Ajami. But then we found that the land on the coast wasn't right. So I sold my share to al-Hajj at cost. With \$15,000 more, I have bought this land from Husayn Ta'an. What I mean is that Husayn Ta'an didn't ask to give me a present and I didn't ask for a present, keeping in mind that Ta'an would not hesitate to offer it. But I purchased it.

[AL-SHIRA'] With your presence there, you have increased land prices and Husayn Ta'an has benefited from the fact.

[Birri] Husayn Ta'an purchased an entire mountain and divided it into plots. Khanafir and others bought from Ta'an. I personally also bought from him, the same as Khanafir.

[AL-SHIRA'] For how much?

[Birri] I purchased the land for \$12 per [square] meter. The agreement called for 4,000 meters. But then I discovered that the said property amounted to 2,500 meters. What I mean is that contrary to what is said, a problem developed with Husayn Ta'an and I didn't get from him what I had paid for.

[AL-SHIRA'] Did he cheat you?

[Birri] No. The records at the Land Office indicate that the area is 4,000 meters. But it seems that they calculate the area of the hill. When the land is leveled, the area diminishes. This is why I was compelled to purchase an adjacent plot from a bedouin at a cost of \$25,000. Thus, the entire piece of land has cost me \$75,000. Husayn Ta'an has nothing to do with it. He is a merchant who buys and sells. As I have already said, neither did I ask nor did he offer. I wish people would ask me so I could give them the answers. I have never needed to take money from anybody, not even from people who are closer to me than Husayn Ta'an—people who are expatriates and with whom I have been friends since childhood. I do not need them. If I did, I would ask. This is not a problem.

If It Were Not for Expatriation

[AL-SHIRA'] Are you comfortable with what some people say about your relations with some expatriates?

[Birri] Of course.

[AL-SHIRA'] With those people who have established commercial and economic interests and have accumulated fortunes in the country?

[Birri] What is wrong with that? First, God has blessed commerce. Second, commercial activity should be honest. These people must not sell adulterated goods because if they do, I will abandon them. Third, I will protect every businessman with a conscience, be he Shi'ite or non-Shi'ite, especially if he is a southerner. I will protect him, as I will protect any supreme southern interest. I do not deny this. Besides, if it were not for expatriation, nobody would have gotten an education.

Nobody can deny this. South Lebanon in particular has not been developed by the supreme government or by the social justice that has been secured by the mighty Lebanon, the greater Lebanon. If somebody wore a necktie in the south, if somebody went to school and learned a little French, and if somebody managed to get his son to become a lawyer, a doctor, or an engineer, then the credit goes to expatriation, either directly or indirectly. I, for example, got an education as a direct result of expatriation. Others got their education as an indirect result of expatriation, because expatriates have set up projects from which the people have benefitted. If there is a pretty building in the south and if an institute has been established in the south, including the institutes set up by Imam Musa al-Sadr and Amal, then the credit goes to expatriate money. I say this with respect for the resident Lebanese who has benefitted from expatriate money.

[AL-SHIRA'] Will the recent developments reassure the expatriate?

[Birri] Where?

[AL-SHIRA'] The liquidation of some banks and other developments.

[Birri] No. How could he be reassured? As for banks, I tried to support MEBCO [Middle East Banking Company] with all my might by attracting to it expatriate money to enable it to stand on its feet.

[AL-SHIRA'] On the grounds that it is a Shi'ite bank?

[Birri] Yes, on the grounds that it is Shi'ite and expatriate. Why? Is there anything wrong with this? When the Brazilian Bank asked me for help, I tried to assist it. Should I refrain from assisting any Shi'ite bank just so I will appear to be impartial? I do not suffer from this complex. Conversely, a Shi'ite bank makes me more enthusiastic. Recently, the Pakistani Bank and Globe Bank approached me and I tried to help. I did the same with the Beirut and Arab World Bank. In this context, when it was rumored that the Lebanon and the Expatriate Bank had gone bankrupt, I hastened to deposit Amal's funds in that bank. People were rushing to withdraw their money from that bank and I was sending money to it. I also asked the central bank to send it money in trucks, if the Lebanon and Expatriate Bank could cover it. I also suggested to the bank management to open the bank on Saturday and Sunday to pay people their money. When depositors saw this, they changed their mind about withdrawing their money. The bank people came to me and thanked me. There isn't an institution in the country which I have not supported with all my strength.

I exerted all my power to save MEBCO Bank. Regrettably, those people did not obey me. When the issue developed, I sent a private car to Jawad al-Shalabi, who was in Damascus, to bring him so he would be present at his bank. Some people have said that the reason for the bank's bankruptcy is that Amal withdrew its money from

it, keeping in mind that there is nothing wrong with anybody withdrawing his money from any bank. The very honest truth is that in MEBCO's case, Amal lost \$486,490 or 428,710,780 Lebanese pounds, or close to one billion Lebanese pounds, not counting the interest. I still have the receipts and documents. Despite this, some people say that Amal caused the bank to go bankrupt by withdrawing its money. I wish we did withdraw them. We still have funds deposited in MEBCO.

[AL-SHIRA'] Are you defending the bank, not the depositors, now?

[Birri] This is obviously underhanded. I did not tell Shi'ites to put their money in MEBCO and they did not consult me. It is possible that the [bank] people exploited the Shi'ite situation and used publicity to take advantage of this situation. Money belonging to Amal and to al-Wza'i Port is in the bank. This, in itself, is evidence of our confidence in the bank.

Second, the al-Wza'i Port is managed by a company which includes us and them [MEBCO], as well as dozens of other shareholders, some of whom have a share valued at 10,000 pounds. Some expatriates, such as Yasin Jabir, were shareholders. The [bank] people did not subscribe as a bank, but as individuals, as in the case of Ja'far al-Shalabi and his son.

[AL-SHIRA'] Now people who had their money in the bank have lost it.

[Birri] The bank is under liquidation.

[AL-SHIRA'] They [the bank management] have stopped paying and the situation requires a political position from you.

[Birri] Don't you know that "hell has broken loose" between me and them. I still do not talk to them. I believe that if they had come here, if they had not already been sunk, they would have saved themselves.

[AL-SHIRA'] What is your interpretation of this story?

[Birri] After I read the report, I became certain that there was negligence, deficiency, and illwill.

[AL-SHIRA'] What can be done?

[Birri] The central bank and the government have taken over control.

[AL-SHIRA'] And what about the hapless depositors?

[Birri] All will not be lost. A certain percentage of their money will be returned to them.

Banking Confidentiality

[AL-SHIRA'] Do you agree to the slogan of "where did you get it?" How can it be implemented in the country, and how can it be applied to you and to the others?

[Birri] To me?

[AL-SHIRA'] As has been done by Hasan al-Rifa'i, who has proposed lifting banking confidentiality

[Birri] Hasan al-Rifa'i has talked to me about the issue. I believe that any official, especially a cabinet-level official, accused of a certain charge must put himself at the judiciary's disposal in whatever pertains specifically to the charge. This is because the public prosecutor has no business finding out how much money I have. What concerns him is the issue over which suspicions are raised.

I have mentioned, for example, that I purchased a piece of land for a sum from Husayn Ta'an. Husayn Ta'an is present and the bills and the checks are also available. They are numerous because I could not build all at once. I purchased a piece of land for \$17,000. I take money from nobody, even though I have asked Husayn Ta'an and others dozens of times to contribute to Amal. Where Amal is concerned, I do not mind asking for money. For private matters, I do not do it.

Let us return to our main issue. If a charge is made against a politician, then he has to explain his position. For me personally, I have been minister of southern affairs and I have had control of al-Zahrani funds, which amounted to 11.8722 million pounds. I have implemented projects with them. 'Awn and others had embezzled money and suspicions and whispers had spread. If the southerners are aware of the projects that are implemented, then not all people are. I have personally submitted requests to the Council of Ministers asking them to "come, make me give an account" and telling them that they still had money with me. A decision was made at the Council of Ministers and a subcommittee consisting of four or five members of the Banking Oversight Committee and chairman of the Disbursement Authority was formed. I did not hesitate to submit the contracts, documents, and receipts for the sums that I had deposited and the interest earned. I was minister of justice at the time, and yet I presented to the subcommittee everything it requested. The conclusion of the report made by the committee is that I owed them 3 billion pounds, which I agreed to pay, on the condition that they complete the works and projects, including Wadi Jilu project. But they refused to make a commitment and kept demanding the money. We carried on with the work and whenever a project was completed, I turned it over to them, as I did with the Wadi Jilu project. Now, I only have one more project, namely the project for the road and the bridge that links Bint Jubayl, my area, to al-Nabatiyah. The bridge alone will cost nearly 2.2 billion pounds. In the session before last, I notified the Council of Ministers that the account of the Ministry of Southern Affairs must be liquidated, because I had an account to settle with them. I also requested that an inventory be made of the spent sums and remaining sums of money. I threatened that unless this is done, then I would implement other projects with the money remaining after the bridge is completed. I demanded this because I feel that I would invent a project, and I have no right to do so.

[AL-SHIRA'] Has the Sidon highway been built?

[Birri] The projects I have mentioned have changed the face of the south, and all of them together have not cost more than \$11 million. They spend such a sum on a small part of a highway or they steal it. I think that nobody believes that all these projects have been implemented with such a small sum.

When I learned that "some antennae had been raised in order to distort issues," I applied to the Council of Ministers to check my statement of account. I presented my funds to the council so as to settle the accounts. It is my opinion that instead of talking about lifting the confidentiality of bank accounts, this model should be emulated.

[AL-SHIRA'] The targets may be those who devour vast sums of money on the pretext of implementing a road link?

[Birri] I have said that as soon as there is a suspicion, any politician, like any civil servant, must be brought to account in accordance with the penal code, not just by lifting confidentiality from his bank accounts, because a politician can cheat by depositing his money in foreign banks. I do not want the issue to be turned into a big production. If a certain official is accused of a certain issue and if he says that he does not have any accounts with any Lebanese bank, would this mean that he is a "decent person?"

[AL-SHIRA'] For the words to be serious, what do you say to having every official submit a disclosure statement before he assumes any responsible position and having him submit another disclosure statement before he ends his service?

[Birri] This should be especially directed toward ministers and deputies, each of whom should submit a disclosure statement, keeping in mind that there will still be space for lying and "cheating." But these disclosure statements will provide some reassurance, at least. A minister will then say: I had this and that before I became minister and I have this and that now.

[AL-SHIRA'] Some will be pleased with the news from the U.S. Congress saying that 24 members have bounced checks.

[Birri] There, people are watched and brought to account. The biggest crime there is tax evasion.

[AL-SHIRA'] Is there a chance of an imminent cabinet reshuffle?

[Birri] The first to raise this issue has been our brother Walid Junblatt. But I have no information.

[AL-SHIRA'] Would you approve of shuffling the cabinet ministers, thus changing the portfolios they hold?

[Birri] This government! "What can a hairdresser do for an ugly face?"

[AL-SHIRA'] Is there no chance of a reshuffle?

[Birri] I am not opposed to a reshuffle but "what can one do for an ugly face?" Regrettably and to be very frank, the government has lost credibility. Its beginning was one of the most important beginnings in the history of Lebanese governments. It made major accomplishments, such as absorbing the militias and so forth. But it then started to procrastinate in its decisions. This government could have been the most important Lebanese government since before independence if it had continued to implement its decisions seriously. At the outset, it dealt with issues seriously. If we disagreed on anything, a committee was formed from within the cabinet to examine the disagreement and then convey its conclusions to the cabinet to make the appropriate decision.

Dr. 'Ali al-Hasan Rebuttal to Birri

92AE0369C Beirut AL-SHIRA' in Arabic
30 Mar 92 pp 18-19

[Article: "Dr. 'Ali al-Hasan Answers Birri"]

[Text] AL-SHIRA' publishes here the message it has received from friend Dr. 'Ali al-Hasan in rebuttal of some contents of the interview that AL-SHIRA' conducted with Amal Chairman Minister Nabih Birri, which it published in its previous edition. Out of our eagerness for objectivity, we open the pages of AL-SHIRA' for a debate on what Minister Birri has raised, while giving our friend the minister the right to make any clarification or addition.

[begin rebuttal] Brother Hasan [Sabra].

Historian Arnold Toynbe said: "Amending geography requires a rifle and a battlefield, whereas the weapon for distorting history is a pen and a book."

You are aware of the relationship that ties me to Nabih, and that I have had the honor of maintaining throughout these years, despite all that has happened. You are also aware that if I have managed to overlook the spoils, then I will also not accept the penalty and I will not agree to see my past and the past of honorable brothers in Amal's first political bureau undermined. This is what has happened in the press interview conducted by AL-SHIRA' with His Excellency Nabih Birri.

His excellency says: "Regarding Amal's physiology, Imam al-Sadr selected the Political Bureau members. His justification was that the movement hadn't come into existence yet. This means that he was operating at two levels. At the top level, he selected people for the facade. At the base level, he selected people to build the organization." Birri adds: "Those people whom the imam brought for a purpose he had in his mind, it is natural that they wouldn't succeed. Ninety percent of them vanished with the first election."

He goes on to single me out, and I thank him for the confidence I know he has in me and for his love which I

reciprocate, saying: "As for Dr. 'Ali al-Hasan, I was eager to have them in the Political Bureau. I nominated them several times and they failed."

Before I start my actual rebuttal of an erring memory, whether due to ignorance, intention, or misinterpretation, I will reiterate God's words, may He be exalted, which say: "Invite (all) to the way of the Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: For thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His path and who receive guidance." [Koran 16:125] I will strive to select each word and phrase carefully in my rebuttal, trying as hard as possible not to anger the gentleman [Birri] out of my wish to preserve his love and out of my belief in his major role in preserving the unity of Amal, impurities notwithstanding, not to mention his vanguard role in preserving the imam's strategic line regarding the resistance and preserving the organic relationship with sisterly Syria, as well as my belief in all the accomplishments and development projects—such as roads, water, and bridges—that he has achieved for the south—accomplishments that nobody before Birri has ever achieved in the history of our south. I beg him to let others speak for him and to avoid the "I" that doesn't add to prominent people but rather detracts from them, even if his excellency is "one of those who make history," as Mitterand described him. But it behooves one who makes history not to forget a great part of the history of his movement, its leader, and his comrades who were chosen by the imam, but not as a facade or as decor, contrary to what his excellency thinks.

I do not know why I have tried for years and why I continue to try to make excuses for him, at times with conviction and at others against my conviction. But I find myself today compelled to ask Mr. Nabih: Has memory failed you or is it that you are not sufficiently acquainted with Amal's history from 1976-1980, beginning with Tyre [al-Sur], Kayfun, and 'Aramun and ending with Alouette in Ba'labakk and al-Hazmiyah? Or is it your remoteness from Lebanon—and not for a short time—which was dictated by the security conditions following the attempt on your life, or is it something else? I do not know. Is this how history is written? It is a disgrace to dwarf Amal by characterizing its men as a facade. It is a shame, dear sir, to preclude comrades of yours who pledged to God and took the oath with the imam in a momentous instant of their history and past—men who pledged to God to devote their life to support the dispossessed through a faithful movement which we joined without titles. Now, you want to oust us from its history without titles or gains.

God, may He be praised and exalted, says: "We relate to thee their story in truth: They were youths who believed in their Lord, and we advanced them in guidance" [Koran 18:13].

Who told you, Mr. Nabih, that members of the first political bureau and yesterday's comrades were a facade? Did you hear it from Imam al-Sadr or is it your personal

conclusion and interpretation? Just as a reminder, you know that they worked and that tasks in the leadership and on the ground were assigned to them. Don't you know, for example, that I, along with you and Shaykh Muhammad Ya'qub, had the honor to be a member of the committee in charge of relations with the progressive and Palestinian forces? It is not only me, but many others also. Have you asked about Colonel 'Abbas Makki's role in the military and the scouts, about Dr. Husayn Kan'an's role in running the Political Bureau and educating the cadre, Dr. Husayn al-Yatim's role in the cultural and humanitarian institutions, and about Colonel 'Akif Haydar, Dr. Jamal Mansur, and many others—all of whom were not chosen by the imam as a facade?

Do you recall what happened after the imam was removed? Do you—you who "took over the trust from the master of the trust"—remember that the objective was to strike the trust and to destroy the imam's line? Do you know how often we met secretly and under the cloak of darkness during your absence in the United States and after your return? Where did we meet? We met in our homes, and my humble home was one of those places, until we moved to al-Zahra'. We sneaked into those homes and left them separately at night because we did not have cars and bodyguards. Have you heard of the armed attack on Husayn al-Husayn's home—an attack which compelled some members of this facade, as well as al-Husayni's sons, to carry arms to prevent the attackers from occupying the house?

Let's forget about other details, because I hate to repeat the word "I." But I was one of those in the facade and I was forced to sleep out of my home frequently for security reasons.

You [Birri] also say: "Those people whom the imam brought for a purpose he had in mind." Again, I believe that you were not present at those sessions in al-Hazmiyah to hear the imam's explanation: "You are not better than the sect. But you are the best I have managed to select, each according to his ability, capacity, and qualities."

So it is most likely that, to date, the gentleman's error has been due to inadequate information. As for the other part, namely that you nominated us and we failed, let us recall again the elections, which I think you remember better than the period that preceded them.

After the imam's disappearance, the Political Bureau elected Husayn al-Husayni as secretary general and Dr. Husayn Kan'an as chairman of the bureau. What a coincidence! Both are from al-Biqa'. We did not fear that the movement, which was still young then, would collapse because a southerner was not in the central leadership. Today, you fear for the movement because there is no balance between the districts! The Political Bureau then added the district officers, namely 'Atif 'Awn, Hasan Hashim, and Husayn al-Musawi, as members. (It isn't as you say, namely that brother 'Atif 'Awn operated

at the base level and was not known at the top, and that he rose when the General Secretariat was elected). We continued to work and to train the cadres at a time when the others persisted in their battles against us, and the missile that was fired at the bedroom in which Secretary General Husayn al-Husayni slept was not the last of those battles. Do you know that some of those heroes who have fought Israel in the south and in Khaldah belong to the cadres that were trained by this "facade" Political Bureau. I beg your pardon, but one thing reminds me of another.

During your absence, we decided to nominate you as assistant secretary general and the Political Bureau decided to summon the general congress to elect a new political bureau when Husayn al-Husayni refused to agree to continue or to be nominated. On the basis of internal arrangements in which our religious authorities and the imam's families took part, and after al-Sayyid Sadri [al-Sadr?] refused to take over the responsibility, elections were held on the basis of "prior arrangement." The new Political Bureau and the General Secretariat were elected. Many of us, including myself, didn't run for election. We were not even present. So how could we lose?

Perhaps what you have in mind are the later elections, when you asked many of us to run for election during a meeting at your residence. After a lengthy and friendly debate and for reasons we have already mentioned, only brother 'Akif Haydar and brother 'Husayn al-Yatim were nominated.

Brother Nabih, I will conclude my response by saying that I have love and friendship for you in my heart and respect in my mind and intellect. I say this not out of fearing you, but out of my fear for you and for a faithful movement which we tended it as a blossom until it grew and flourished. But I fear for the movement from the signs of early old age. Let us avoid exaggeration. Open your ears, not just to those who have customarily brought you lies and plots, and who fill your ears with words of admiration today and who will plot against you tomorrow. Open your ears to brothers who seek nothing other than Amal's good and who want Amal to be a high, lofty, and noble tree with firm roots and with branches high in the sky. All of us may make mistakes. Do not get angry, do not rage, and leave emotion aside when you read what I have written. Only God is perfect. The water has dropped low, and everybody realized this in the latest general congress. Beware lest the ship be wrecked. As for us, the people you have characterized as "those who have been in their homes for 10 years," we reiterate God's words, may He be exalted: "And do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from God; nor grieve over them and distress not thyself" [Koran 16:127].

Brother Hasan [Sabra], I believe that despite the love that binds us to Mr. Birri, and for the sake of journalistic integrity, you must listen to the imam's brothers, 90 percent—and now 100 percent—of whom have disappeared with the election, and may God keep you safe.

Listing, Confessional Makeup of Category I Jobs

92AE0372A Beirut AL-SAFIR in Arabic 10 Apr 92 p 6

[Article by 'Adnan al-Hajj: "Survey of Category I Jobs, Vacancies in Public, Joint Departments, Establishments; 54 Percent of Vacancies in Cabinet Ministries, Including 40 General Directors in Ministries, 17 in Public Establishments"]

[Text] The issue of filling vacant Category I job positions in public departments, in public establishments that have boards of directors, and in joint establishments and companies, has entered the final phase of sectarian division, meaning division of the jobs among the sects and denominations before dwelling on the names.

The ongoing discussions among the regime leaders, namely President Ilyas Hirawi, Parliament Speaker Husayn al-Husayni, and Prime Minister 'Umar Karami, are based on statistical lists of Category I jobs in the various departments, public and joint establishments, and boards of directors. The lists have been drawn up by the Civil Service Commission and have been presented to the Council of Ministers.

The dispute is currently focused on filling 40 vacancies out of a total of 74 positions in the public departments, plus 17 positions out of a total of 41 positions in public establishments—positions ranging from general director to chairman of the board. This is in addition to the dispute over introducing changes and modifications into occupied positions and into boards of directors of joint establishments.

The statistical lists concerned, published by AL-SAFIR, demonstrate the following regarding the filled and vacant Category I jobs:

A. There are 74 Category I positions in the public departments (cabinet ministries), excluding the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Of these positions, 40, or 54 percent of the total jobs in the public departments, i.e., the service ministries, are vacant (see Table 1). The statistics show the filled positions and the sects of the employees occupying them.

B. There are 26 Category I positions and similar positions filled by general directors in the public establishments, of which 13 are vacant (Table 7). There are 15 Category I positions in various boards of directors of public establishments, including four vacant positions (Table 8).

C. The statistical lists also include an inventory of the filled and vacant Category I positions in the Ministry of Foreign and Expatriate Affairs. This inventory shows that the ministry has 61 Category I positions with the rank of ambassador or minister plenipotentiary, of which 20 positions are vacant (Table 5). It should be noted here that the debate on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cadre is concerned more with formations and

transfers than with appointments and filling vacant positions. This is due to the special nature of the foreign corps work.

D. Within the framework of the 'one basket' policy adopted for Category I positions, the statistical lists include a list enumerating Category I jobs in joint companies and establishments in which the government is a partner (Intra Company, Middle East Airlines, Industrial Development Bank, the Financing Bank, and the casino), totaling 15 positions altogether. It should be noted that the vacancy rate in these establishments is negligible, and that the positions are subject to administrative appointments and to changes in the boards of directors (Table 9).

E. The statistics include tables 2, 3, and 4 which concern canceled Category I jobs in public directorates (Public Telephones Directorate), public directorate employees relieved from their positions, and other employees who have been relieved from their positions and appointed members of boards of directors. There are only six of these positions.

AL-SAFIR has learned from ministerial sources that the vacancies in the public directorates, estimated at nearly 53 percent of positions, belong mainly to the Sunni and the Maronites, considering that the sectarian division that is scheduled to be applied on the basis of equal sharing [between Christians and Muslims] is as follows:

1. For Christians, 55 percent goes to the Maronites, 20 percent to the Orthodox, 12 percent to the Catholics, and 13 percent to the Christian minorities.

2. For Muslims, the following division is adopted: 43 percent for the Sunni, 43 percent for the Shi'ites, and 14 percent for the Druze.

It should be noted here that the division adopted prior to the al-Ta'if Accord called for equal sharing on the following basis: 55 percent for the Maronites, 20 percent for the Orthodox, and 12 percent for the Catholics and the minorities, insofar as the Christians are concerned, and 44.45 percent for the Sunni, 42.22 percent for the Shi'ites, and 13.33 percent for the Druze, insofar as the Muslims are concerned.

Until recently, this division—as well as the clinging of some sects to certain influential positions in the administration and their unwillingness to relinquish these positions because they are connected with major directorates—was the subject of disagreement in the discussions on appointments.

The major problem confronting the quick birth of the administrative appointments and changes continues to be the problem of promotion to Category I from within the cadre.

According to the laws and regulations in force, a Category III employee (i.e. a department chairman) may not be promoted to Category II employee (authority chairman) without attending a training course at the

National Administration and Development Institute. This course entitles the employee to be promoted to Category I afterward.

This problem continues to confront the officials concerned with appointments even, though the Civil Service Commission launched six training courses for Category III employees nearly a year ago. Even though 320 employees have graduated from [these courses in] the Development Institute, none of them have been promoted to Category II.

There is disagreement on this issue now, because some people demand that some general directors be employed from outside the cadre or as contract employees.

AL-SAFIR has also learned that another problem continues between the Civil Service Commission and the Council of Ministers, because one minister has demanded that employees in his ministry be promoted from Category III to Category II without attending a training course. The Civil Service Commission has refused to approve the promotions. The dispute was

referred to the Council of Ministers, which has agreed with the minister's law-violating opinion.

This situation has motivated some employees with an interest in the case to file a lawsuit with the State Consultative Council demanding the abolition of this appointment, which violates the law, considering that the Council of Ministers may settle a disagreement in interpreting a legal provision, but may not violate an explicit legal provision.

A ministerial source has told AL-SAFIR that what is being discussed about this category's lists goes beyond appointments to transfers and changes among public directorate and public establishment employees.

This source noted that it is likely that various establishments and companies, such as Middle East Airlines, will be excluded from the 'single basket' for appointments.

Here are the statistical tables for Category I employees in the various public and joint directorates and establishments, along with the vacancy percentages and the sectarian division of filled and vacant positions, as referred to the Council of Ministers by the Civil Service Commission.

Table 1: Category I Positions and Employees in Public Directorates

Job	Employee Name	Sect	Birth Date	Remarks
Civil Service Commission	-	-	-	-
Civil Service Commission Chairman	-	-	1927	Vacant. Previously Held by Ibrahim al-Shuwayri, Catholic
Personnel Directorate Chairman	Fawzi Hubays	Maronite	1936	-
Preparation and Training Directorate Chairman	Hasan al-Hasani	Shi'ite	1928	-
Central Inspection Authority	-	-	-	-
Central Inspection Authority Chairman	-	-	-	Vacant. Previously Held by Hasan Rifat, Sunni
Research and Guidance Directorate Chairman	Habib Mahfuz	Maronite	1928	-
Financial Inspector General	'Adnan Hamadah	Shi'ite	1927	-
General Disciplinary Council	-	-	-	-
General Disciplinary Council Chairman	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Muhammad Dhawq, Sunni
General Disciplinary Council Member	George Shuqayr	Maronite	1931	-
General Disciplinary Council Member	Niqula Ghushn	Orthodox	1940	-
Presidential Office	-	-	-	-
General Director of Presidential Office	-	-	-	Vacant. Previously Held by Joseph Juraysati, Catholic
General Director, Branch Chairman	Mahmud 'Uthman	Sunni	1932	-
General Director, Branch Chairman	Ramiz Khazin	Maronite	1929	-
General Director, Branch Chairman	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Na'il al-As'ad, Sunni

Table 1: Category I Positions and Employees in Public Directorates (Continued)

Job	Employee Name	Sect	Birth Date	Remarks
General Director, Branch Chairman	-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Khalil Haddad, Catholic
General Director, Branch Chairman	-	-	-	Vacant
Prime Minister's Office	-	-	-	-
General Director of Prime Minister's Office	Hisham al-Sha'ar	Sunni	1934	-
General Director, Technical Affairs Branch Chairman	Ilyas al-Nammar	Catholic	1930	-
General Director, Legal Affairs Branch Chairman	-	-	-	Vacant, Previously Held by Shafiq Munayminah, Sunni
General Director, Protocol and Public Relations Branch Chairman	'Abd-al-Rahman al-Shaykhah	Sunni	1930	-
General Director, Ministerial Affairs Branch Chairman	-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Yusuf Istifan, Maronite
General Director of Central Statistics Directorate	-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Ibrahim Tarabulsi, Sunni
General Director of Mufti's Office Affairs	Huayn al-Quwwatli	Sunni	1931	-
General Director of Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council	Shaykh Mahmud Farahat	Shi'ite	1934	-
General Director of Druze Denominational Council	-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Khalid Junblatt, Druze
Central Inspection Directorate	-	-	-	-
Administrative Inspector General	Fawzi Abu-Dhiyab	Druze	1930	-
Educational Inspector General	'Abbas Farhat	Shi'ite	1928	-
Engineering Inspector General	-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by George Samahah, Catholic
Health, Social, and Agricultural Inspector General	-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Joseph Abu-Salih, Maronite
General Inspector	-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by (Shawrosh Topegian), Orthodox Armenian
General Inspector	Amin 'Abd-al-Malik	Druze	1928	-
General Inspector	'Abd-al-Ra'uf Fadlallah	Shi'ite	1927	-
General Director of Bids Directorate	-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Riyad Subrah, Sunni
General Inspector, Government Commissioner at General Disciplinary Council	Muhammad al-Khatib	Sunni	1936	-
Ministry of Justice	-	-	-	-
General Director of Ministry of Justice	Wajih Khatir	Sunni	1936	-
Ministry of Interior	-	-	-	-
General Director of Ministry of Interior	-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Samih al-Sulh, Sunni
General Director of Vital Statistics	-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Jamil Ni'mah, Orthodox

Table 1: Category I Positions and Employees in Public Directorates (Continued)

Job	Employee Name	Sect	Birth Date	Remarks
General Director of Palestinian Refugee Affairs Directorate	Yusuf Sabra	Shi'ite	1929	-
Beirut Governor	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by George Samahah, Catholic
Jabal Lubnan Governor	Amin Hammud	Sunni	-	-
Al-Shamal [North] Governor	-	Orthodox	1929	Vacant. Held Previously by Iskandar Ghabril
Al-Janub Governor [South]	Halim Fayyad	Druze	1932	-
Al-Biq'a' Governor	Simon Karam	Maronite	-	-
Al-Nabatiyah Governor	Ghazi Zu'aytir	Shi'ite	-	-
Ministry of Finance	-	-	-	-
General Director of Finance	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Khattar Shibli, Maronite
Government Commissioner of Bank of Lebanon	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Raja Hamadah, Druze
Higher Customs Council Chairman	'Isam Haydar	Shi'ite	1932	1932-
Supreme Customs Council Member	Butrus al-Shaykhah al-Duwayhi	Maronite	1931	-
Supreme Customs Council Member	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Antoine Fath
General Director of Customs	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Shawqi Sha'ban, Sunni
Ministry of Public Works and Transportation	-	-	-	-
General Director of Roads and Buildings	Butrus Jurmani	Maronite	1932	-
General Director of Civil Planning	Muhammad Fawwaz	Shi'ite	1931	-
General Director of Transportation	'Ali Khanafir	Shi'ite	1931	-
General Director of Civil Aviation	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Zuhayr Baydun, Sunni
Ministry of National Education and Fine Arts	-	-	-	-
General Director of National Education	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Salim Harir, Druze
General Director of Youth and Sports	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Ghalib Fahs, Shi'ite
Director of Civil and Technical Education	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Roger al-Shamali, Maronite
Ministry of Health and Social Affairs	-	-	-	-
General Director of Health	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Robert Sa'adah, Maronite
General Director of Social Affairs	Mahdi Sadiq	Shi'ite	1928	-
Ministry of Economy and Commerce	-	-	-	-

Table 1: Category I Positions and Employees in Public Directorates (Continued)

Job	Employee Name	Sect	Birth Date	Remarks
General Director of Economy and Commerce	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Antoine (Mawsalli), Catholic Syriac
General Director of Grains and Sugar Beets Bureau	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Munir Barbari, Orthodox
Ministry of Agriculture	-	-	-	-
General Director of Ministry of Agriculture	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Mustafa Khalid, Sunni
Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications	-	-	-	-
General Director of Postal Service	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Ahmad Malik, Sunni
General Director of Telecommunications Utilization and Maintenance	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Edward Abu-Jawdah, Maronite
General Director of Building and Equipping Means of Communication	-	-	-	New Position. Vacant
Ministry of Labor	-	-	-	-
General Director of Labor	Hamid Khuri	Maronite	1931	-
Ministry of Information	-	-	-	-
General Director of Ministry of Information	Ayyub Hamid	Shi'ite	1954	-
Ministry of Water Resources and Electricity	-	-	-	-
General Director of Water and Electricity Supply	Rida al-Duhayni	Shi'ite	1945	Suspended
General Director of Investment	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Maurice Ghazal, Maronite
Ministry of Tourism	-	-	-	-
General Director of Tourism Affairs	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Hamdi al-Hajj, Sunni
General Director of Antiquities	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Maurice Shihab, Maronite
Ministry of Housing and Cooperatives	-	-	-	-
General Director of Housing	Fu'ad Dhubyan	Druze	1934	-
General Director of Cooperatives	Antoine Adib Sham'un	Maronite	1943	-
Ministry of Industry and Petroleum	-	-	-	-
General Director of Industry	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Alfred al-Dibs, Orthodox
General Director of Petroleum	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by Raymond Rifa'il, Maronite

[as published]

Table 5: Category I Positions and Employees in Public Directorates—Diplomatic Corps

Job	Employee Name	Sect	Birth Date	Remarks
Secretary General of Ministry of Foreign and Expatriate Affairs	Suhayl Shammās	Orthodox	1929	-
Ministry of Foreign and Expatriate Affairs	-	-	-	-
Ambassador	1-Zaydan Zaydan	Maronite	1933	-
Ambassador	2-Samir al-Khuri	Maronite	1937	-
Ambassador	3-Ghazi Shadyaq	Maronite	1936	-
Ambassador	4-Joseph 'Aql	Maronite	1936	-
Ambassador	5-Michel Salamah	Maronite	1929	-
Ambassador	6-Nasib Lahhud	Maronite	-	From Outside Cadre
Ambassador	7-Iskandar 'Ammun	Maronite	1928	-
Ambassador	8-Amin al-Khazin	Maronite	1941	From Outside Cadre
Ambassador	9-Johnny 'Abduh	Maronite	1940	From Outside Cadre
Ambassador	10-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Salim Naffa', Maronite
Ambassador	11-Butrus Ziyadah	-	-	-
Ambassador	12-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Edmond Khayyat, Maronite
Ambassador	13-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Raymond Hunaynah, Maronite
Ambassador	14-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Nasr Salhab, Maronite
Ambassador	15-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Antoine Yazbik, Maronite
Ambassador	16-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Faruq Abi-al-Lama', Maronite
Ambassador	2-Maurice Basun	Orthodox	1928	-
Ambassador	3-Fakhri Saghiyah	Orthodox	1937	-
Ambassador	4-Shawqi Shuwayn	Orthodox	1930	-
Ambassador	5-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Suhayl Furayhi, Orthodox
Ambassador	6-Farid Samahah	Orthodox	1934	-
Ambassador	1-Fu'ad al-Turk	Catholic	1931	-
Ambassador	2-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Jean Riyashi, Catholic
Ambassador	3-Sulayman Farah	Catholic	1933	-
Ambassador	4-Robert 'Arab	Catholic	1933	From Outside Cadre
Ambassador	5-Sulayman Yunus	Catholic	1936	-
Ambassador	1-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Jean Hazu, Catholic Syrian
Ambassador	2-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Jean Kokikyan, Orthodox Armenian
Ambassador	3-	-	-	Vacant
Ambassador	4-	-	-	Vacant
Ambassador	1-'Abd-al-Rahman al-Sulh	Sunni	1929	-
Ambassador	2-'Adil Isma'il	Sunni	1927	-
Ambassador	3-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Salah 'Abbushi, Sunni

Table 5: Category I Positions and Employees in Public Directorates—Diplomatic Corps (Continued)

Job	Employee Name	Sect	Birth Date	Remarks
Ambassador	4-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Hasan Hashshash, Sunni
Ambassador	5-Zafir al-Hasan	Sunni	1935	-
Ambassador	6-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Rashid Fakhuri, Sunni
Ambassador	7-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Ibrahim Khurma, Sunni
Ambassador	8-Khalil Makkawi	Sunni	1930	-
Ambassador	9-Yahya Mahmasani	Sunni	1933	-
Ambassador	10-Salah Sutaytiyah	Sunni	1928	-
Ambassador	11-Ahmad al-Hajj	Sunni	1928	-
Ambassador	12-Makram 'Uwaydat	Sunni	1927	From Outside Cadre
Ambassador	13-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by 'Afif Malas, Sunni
Ambassador	1-Mustafa Harbiyah	Shi'ite	1936	-
Ambassador	2-Mahmud Hammud	Shi'ite	1935	-
Ambassador	3-Fawzi Sulukh	Shi'ite	1931	-
Ambassador	4-Mustafa al-Zayn	Shi'ite	1930	-
Ambassador	5-	-	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Rabi'ah Haydar, Shi'ite
Ambassador	6-Jawdat Nur-al-Din	Shi'ite	1936	-
Ambassador	7-Nizar Farhat	Shi'ite	1937	-
Ambassador	8-'Adnan Badra	Shi'ite	1929	-
Ambassador	9-Ahmad Ibrahim	Shi'ite	1939	-
Ambassador	10-Sa'id al-As'ad	Shi'ite	1928	From Outside Cadre
Ambassador	11-Khalil al-Khalil	Shi'ite	1941	From Outside Cadre
Ambassador	12-	-	-	Vacant Held Previously by Samih al-Baba who has converted from Sunni to Shi'ite
Ambassador	13-Ja'far Ma'awi	Shi'ite	1942	-
Ambassador	1-'Abbas Hamiyah	Druze	1927	-
Ambassador	2-Latif Abu-al-Hasan	Druze	1933	-
Ambassador	3-Adib al-Qintar	Druze	1928	-
Ambassador	4-Walid Nasr	Druze	1942	-

Table 6: Category I Employees in Chamber of Deputies

Job	Employee Name	Sect	Remarks
Secretary General of Office of Chamber of Deputies Speaker	-	Vacant, Held Previously by Ihsan Abu-Khalil	-
General Director	Samir Taqi-al-Din	Druze	-
General Director of Minutes and Sessions	'Adil Shuwayri	Catholic	-
General Director	Anis Sa'd	Shi'ite	-
General Director	'Atif Janibiyah	Shi'ite	-
General Director			-

Table 6: Category I Employees in Chamber of Deputies (Continued)

Job	Employee Name	Sect	Remarks
Adviser With Rank of General Director	Joe Tabit	Maronite	-
Adviser With Rank of General Director	Bisharah Munassa	Catholic	-
Adviser With Rank of General Director	'Abd-al-Amir Sadiq	Shi'ite	-
Adviser With Rank of General Director	Nizar Hamadah	Shi'ite	-

Table 7: General Directors and Similar Positions in Public Establishments

Job	Employee name	Sect	Birth Date	Remarks
General Director of National Records Establishment	Bisharah Habib	Maronite	1927	-
General Director of the Southern Council	'Arif Hammud	Shi'ite	-	-
General Director of Government Employees Cooperative	-	-	-	Vacant. Held Previously by 'Abd-al-Ra'uf Fadlallah. Shi'ite
General Director of Council for Implementing Major Projects in Beirut	'Asim Sinnu	Sunni	-	-
General Director of Council for Implementing Construction Projects	Emile Abi-Nadir	Maronite	-	-
General Director of Railroad and Joint Transportation Authority	'Abdallah Shihab	Maronite	-	-
Chairman of the Educational Research and Development Center	-	-	-	Vacant. Previously Held by George al-Murr. Orthodox, as Acting Chairman
General Director of Scientific Agricultural Research Authority	-	-	-	Vacant. Previously Held by Joseph Harawi. Maronite
General Director of Lebanon Electricity Authority	-	-	1927	Vacant. Held Previously by Muhyi-al-Din Sinnu. Sunni
General Director of Beirut Water Authority	-	-	1927	Vacant. Held Previously by Lucien Mubayyid. Maronite
General Director of al-Litani River National Authority	Nasir Nasrallah	Shi'ite	-	-
General Comptroller, Southern Council	-	-	-	New Position (No Appointment Made)
General Director of Mount Lebanon Water Authority	-	-	-	New Position (No Appointment Made)
General Director of Northern Lebanon Water Authority	-	-	-	New Position (No Appointment Made)
General Director of Southern Lebanon Water Authority	-	-	-	New Position (No Appointment Made)
General Director of al-Biq'a' Water Authority	-	-	-	New Position (No Appointment Made)
Lebanese University President	-	-	-	Vacant
General Director of the Lebanese International Fair in Tripoli	-	-	-	Held Previously by Amadu Shihab. Maronite
General Director of National Tourism Development Council	Nasir Safi-al-Din	Shi'ite	-	(from) Public Service Association

Table 7: General Directors and Similar Positions in Public Establishments (Continued)

Job	Employee name	Sect	Birth Date	Remarks
Chairman of National Tourism Development Council	Samir Marun	Maronite	-	-
General Director of National Investment Insurance Organization	'Atif Kahil	Shi'ite	-	-
General Director of Social Security	-	-	Vacant, Previously Held by Dr. Rida Wahid	-
General Director of National Scientific Research Council	-	-	-	
Chairman of Independent Housing Fund Authority	Farhat Qadduh	Shi'ite	-	By Contract
Chairman of Radio Orient Authority (Ojero)	Mahmud Hatab	Sunni	-	-
General Director of Radio Orient (Ojero)	-	-	-	-

Table 8: (Fulltime) Boards of Directors of Public Establishments

Job	Employee Name	Sect	Remarks
Chairman of Board of the Council for Implementing Major Projects in Beirut	Muhammad Ghaziri	Sunni	-
Board Member of the Council for Implementing Major Projects in Beirut	Samir Mansur	Shi'ite	-
Board Member of the Council for Implementing Major Projects in Beirut	-	-	Vacant
Chairman of Board of the Council for Implementing Construction Projects	-	-	Held Previously by Eli Sha'ya, Orthodox
Member of Board of Directors of the Council for Implementing Construction Projects	Nur-al-Din Ghaziri	Sunni	-
Member of Board of Directors of the Council for Implementing Construction Projects	Malik Shams	Shi'ite	-
Southern Council Chairman	Hasan Yusuf	Shi'ite	-
Southern Council Member	Samir 'Azar	Maronite	-
Southern Council Member	Shafiq al-Turk	Sunni	-
Chairman of Development and Reconstruction Board	al-Fadi Shalaq	Sunni	-
Deputy Chairman of Development and Reconstruction Board	Butrus Antoine Labaki	Maronite	-
Deputy Chairman of Development and Reconstruction Board	Ibrahim Muhammad Mahdi Shams-al-Din	Shi'ite	-
Secretary General of Development and Reconstruction Board	Nihad George Barudi	Catholic	-
Green Project Committee Chairman	-	-	-
Green Project Committee Member	-	-	Vacant
Green Project Committee Member	-	-	Vacant

Table 9: Category I Positions and Employees in Joint Establishments and Companies

Job	Employee Name	Sect	Remarks
Chairman of Board and General Manager of National Industrial and Tourism Development Bank	'Umar Musaykah	Sunni	-
General Director of Intra Investment Company	Lucien Dahdah	Maronite	-
Chairman of Middle East Airlines Board of Directors	Salim Salam	Sunni	-
Chairman of Board and General Manager of Financing Bank	Kamal Bahsali	Sunni	-

Table 9: Category I Positions and Employees in Joint Establishments and Companies (Continued)

Job	Employee Name	Sect	Remarks
Chairman of Board and General Manager of Lebanon Television	George Skaf	Catholic	-
Chairman of Board of National Agricultural Development Bank and Chairman of Board of Kuwait and Arab World Bank	Ahmad al-Hajj	Shi'ite	-
Chairman of Board and General Manager of Housing Bank	Joseph Sasin	Orthodox	-
Chairman of Board of National Industrial, Agricultural, and Real Estate Loan Bank	Shaykh Salim al-Khuri	Maronite	-
Casino du Liban Board Chairman and Board Chairman of National Deposit Insurance Corporation	Khattar Shibli	-	-
Chairman of Board and General Manager of Orient Bank	-	-	Bank Being Liquidated
Beirut Stock Exchange Commission Chairman and General Manager	Antoine Khawaja	Maronite	-
The Financial Company Board Chairman	Dr. As'ad Sawaya	Maronite	-
Chairman of Board and General Manager of the Tobacco Control Directorate	-	-	-
Beirut Port	Provisional Ministerial Committee	-	Chaired Previously by Joseph al-Khazin

Table 10: Category I Positions and Employees in Bank of Lebanon

Job	Employee Name	Sect
Bank of Lebanon Governor	Shaykh Michel al-Khuri	Maronite
First Deputy Governor of Bank of Lebanon	Mahfuz Sikkini	Shi'ite
Second Deputy Governor of Bank of Lebanon	Ghassan 'Ayyash	Druze
Third Deputy Governor of Bank of Lebanon	Marwan Ghandur	Sunni
Fourth Deputy Governor of Bank of Lebanon	Kalbajian	Armenian
Chairman of Banking Oversight Commission	Muhammad Ba'asin	Sunni
Member of Banking Oversight Commission	Faruq Mahfuz	Shi'ite
Member of Banking Oversight Commission	Maurice Sidi	Catholic
Member of Banking Oversight Commission	'Abdallah Saydi	Orthodox
Member of Banking Oversight Commission	Khalil Asaf	Maronite

Report on Status of Displaced Persons, Statistics

92AE0371A Beirut AL-SAFIR in Arabic 11 Apr 92 p 3

[Article by Fatimah Huhu: "Displaced Persons File To Be Closed in 3 Stages Before Parliamentary Elections. Return Plan To Begin in June on Coastal Road. End in al-Shuf"]

[Text] Najla Rahmah: "My children slept in the post office a whole month before we found a house."

Rashidah Dahir: "The government has money for members of parliament and ministers, but the displaced person dies of hunger and becomes a vagrant outside his home."

Fu'ad Tabit: "The solution is to give long-term loans for rebuilding destroyed homes."

'Abd-al-Latif Bazzi: "I do not dare risk returning to Burj Hammud again. I suffered a lot until I started my life again in 'Safir' [quotes as published, possibly al-Sfayrah]."

Murtada Khanafir: "The problem of displaced persons will not be solved unless the Israeli enemy in the south leaves."

Rasmiyah al-Hajj: "We acknowledge that we have trespassed on others' property, but we were also victims of injustice, and the government must insure an alternative."

Mahdi Zu'aytar: "Our houses in al-Fanar were not damaged at all, but they are occupied. If they make room for us there, we will leave here."

Michel Abu-Shaqra: "If I die here, it means that it's all over with my house and land in al-Damur."

These are a few of their words, testimonials, and sufferings. They sum up the problem and the distance to a peaceful future.

These are some of their dreams of returning to their land and to the homes from which they were evicted, sometimes by force of arms and massacres, sometimes by fear and despair. These statements sum up all the contradictions of the issue and the differing positions on it. Because the problem is nationwide, and because the al-Ta'if Accord specified "a fundamental solution to the refugee problem, affirmation of the right of every Lebanese refugee since 1975 to return to the place he left, and legislation to guarantee this right and assure the means of return and reconstruction," the problem has begun to gain the attention of officials. It is a political, social, and humanitarian problem, such that the situation in the country will not stabilize unless it is solved justly and unless the Lebanese population mix is restored, despite the demographic adjustment that took place after 1982.

Prime Minister 'Umar Karami's commission to Minister of State for Refugee Affairs Elie Hubayqah to produce a study of how to treat this problem has elicited various political reactions. This became apparent with the boycott by the Lebanese Forces and with the position that Minister Walid Jumblatt took, linking the question of the refugees' return to a comprehensive solution. All this emphasizes the fact that any solution to the Lebanese crisis will remain deficient if the refugee issue is not settled.

The issue seems to be gaining the interest of politicians, especially with the approach of parliamentary elections. Many want the refugees to return to their former homes because it would help candidates garner votes.

Solution Before Elections

Political sources say that solutions to this problem will come very soon, after the end of the refugees' conference scheduled for late this month. This conference is to lay down the necessary solutions to the refugee issue on the basis of the study produced by the ministry's Refugee Records Office. Implementation is to begin this June.

Sources close to Minister Hubayqah told AL-SAFIR that the working group preparing the study has formulated a preliminary plan to gather information and define the size of the refugee problem. A [survey] form has been created to achieve this goal. Its purpose will be to conduct research in addition to what has been done by the Interior Ministry, the Department of Social Affairs, and the Jesuit University, since these studies are inadequate.

The sources described the contributions of previous studies as being specialized within the context of aspects of the refugee problem. Some were demographic studies; others were social, economic, political, or historical. The majority of them were specialized. They researched a single topic or limited aspects of a single topic—demographic, social, or economic—based on samples,

sectors, groups, or regions. The current study, which the Office of Refugee Records is preparing, aims at lighting the way for social and economic action to improve the refugees' conditions. It will try to answer two groups of questions. The first group includes: What is the importance of the amplitude and volume of movements of forced emigration? In what region do the refugees live? What is their distribution? Where are they concentrated? What are their distinctive characteristics? The second group of questions includes: Under what conditions are they living? What are their problems, their needs, and their techniques of adapting? What are their aspirations in the milieu that has harbored them?

Regarding the soundness of the study and its closeness to reality, the sources affirmed that there had been meetings with heads of municipalities, associations, and members of parliament to supply the office with lists of names of people from evacuated villages and help fill out the forms. There is also a descriptive study to determine the characteristics of the refugees who have not filled out the forms, regardless of whether they are refugees, non-residents in the municipality, non-refugees, people who are tired of filling out forms, or people who are boycotting.

The sources said: "This method has assured us of nearly complete coverage, despite the difficulties we faced in cities like Bhamdun, Beirut, and al-Nab'ah, where it is difficult to carry out a survey like this, although it is easy in villages."

Return Plan

The same sources said that Minister Hubayqah is studying a plan prepared by a Lebanese army colonel. The plan aims at returning displaced persons to their homes in various areas in three stages, after insuring security protection for the plan. It will require deployment of 3,000 Lebanese Army personnel in the areas of return, in coordination with the Interior Ministry and the Public Security Administration.

The first stage of the plan involves the return of displaced persons to the following areas along the coastal road: Khaldah, al-Na'imah, Bi'wirta, Harah al-Na'imah, al-Damur, al-Mashraf, al-Dalhmiyah, al-Sa'diyat, al-Jiyah, Wadi al-Zaynah, al-Rumaylah, 'Alman, Majdaluna, al-Mughayriyah, al-Maslakh, al-(Karantina), al-Nab'ah, al-Dikwanah, Jisr al-Basha, Tariq al-Sham [al-Sham Road], Ra's al-Nab', and the villages east of Sidon [al-Sayda].

On the mountain road: al-Matn al-A'la, Suq al-Gharb, 'Aliyah, Bhamdun, Bkhishtay, al-'Abbadiyah, Ba'ishmayh, Ra's al-Harf, Sawfar, al-Shabaniyah, 'Ayn Darah, Hammana, and Falugha.

The second stage involves the return of displaced persons to the following areas: Jun, al-Mukhtarah, Dayr al-Makhlis, Mazra'at al-Dahr, (Jlayliyah), Mtullah, Mazbud, Shhim, Kitrmaya, al-Wardaniyah, Dalhun.

'Ayn al-Asad, al-Shamis, al-Marj, B'asir, al-Burjayn, al-Dibbiyah, 'Ayn al-Hawr, al-(Mihriyah), Sirjbal, Kafr Faqud, Bayt al-Din, Kafr Nabrak, Batlun, al-Baruk, Brih, 'Ayn Zhalta, al-Ramliyah, Arzuniyah, Shanay, Mansuriyah Bhamdun, Btair, Sharun, 'Ayn (Traz), Rishmayya, Majdal al-Ma'ush, Silfaya, Kafr Matta, 'Bayh, Shartun, Kafr 'Amay, Baysur, 'Aramun, Bshamun, Bmakkin, al-Ghabun, Kayfun, Shimlan, 'Aynab, Darayya, Baq'un, Dayr al-Qamar, Dayr Durit, and Ban-witi.

The third stage involves the return of displaced persons to the following villages: Mu'asir al-Shuf, Mristi, Niha, Batir, Jiba', Harah Jandal, Ba'daran, al-Khuraybah, al-Mukhtarrah, 'Ammatur, Butmah, Judaydah, Mazra'at al-Shuf, Gharifah, al-Samqaniyah, Biq'ata, B'aqlin, 'Ayn B'al, Hasrut, 'Anut, and al-Fakharah.

The sources explained that the plan may encounter problems, as some coastal villages, for example, have been destroyed or occupied. The problem could be remedied by insuring alternate housing or by establishing a plan to rebuild the destroyed areas.

In some areas, the first-stage return process will coincide with subsequent stages—for example, al-Nab'ah, which is now occupied by displaced persons from al-Shuf. Because the plan for a return to al-Shuf will take place in the third stage, the people of al-Nab'ah will return gradually, coinciding with the implementation of the return of al-Shuf refugees.

The people of al-Karantina (1,200 families who own 370 pieces of property) are proposing a plan for their return. It involves the government's giving them a part of its public domain in the region and building large housing complexes to house these families as part of a project for good city planning that will preserve the beauty of the region.

The sources said that the division of the return into stages will take into consideration available financial resources, the government's security abilities, the circumstances under which the people were displaced, and the refugees' current conditions.

Political Conditions

The sources believe that, since the al-Ta'if Agreement, political conditions have been ready for the refugees' return. Political parties and forces have affirmed their support for their return. The political decision that the government will make will be a single decision that applies to everyone, but its implementation will take place in stages.

The sources stated that Minister Walid Jumblatt has no problem with the question of the refugees' return, and they added: "Some people are using the issue against Jumblatt. His statement that there can be no return except within a comprehensive framework for a solution has been used against him. Some people have read it as if it were a call for the refugees' not returning. In fact,

Minister Jumblatt is cooperating well with the Refugee Office personally, through his party, through the civil administration, and in the various information media of the Progressive Socialist Party. As for the Lebanese Forces, they have called for a boycott, even though Minister Hubayqah contacted Minister Roger Dib, in the wake of a statement by Lebanese Forces commander Samir Ja'ja', announcing that there was no need for a displaced persons count because such statistics already existed. It later turned out that the Lebanese Forces had no count. Minister Dib confirmed this to Minister Hubayqah and interpreted the political position of the Lebanese Forces as an attempt to impede the process of filling out the [survey] forms. Nevertheless, the centers in East Beirut were very crowded. It has become clear to us that the study about which Samir Ja'ja' was talking is the same one that is in the hands of the Organization for Social Revitalization. We have included its results in the draft of our study."

The sources corrected themselves, saying that the Organization for Social Revitalization count was not so much a study as a record of families that had been displaced during the rounds of the Lebanese civil war and that had received aid from the revitalization organization.

Housing Problem

Regarding a solution to the housing problem, the sources stated that this will take place in coordination with the Housing Ministry. Refugees will be given priority in the ministry's plans. Also, the Bank of Lebanon has called on private banks to intervene to support the housing policy. For example, there is a proposal currently under study submitted by the European Banking Company to build 6,500 housing complexes in six regions: Sidon, Tyre, 'Aramun, al-Mkallis, Zahlah, and Tripoli. Each complex would include 500 houses to be sold on installment plans.

The sources said that this project will have a direct connection to solving the refugee crisis, because most of the refugees have no land for rebuilding. We have been informed that the Council for Development and Rebuilding will provide its financial resources and will work to obtain external aid to fund housing projects, provided that technical studies are obtained in this regard. Benefit will also be derived from the protocols signed with foreign countries during the administration of President Amin Jumayyil.

The sources revealed that Minister Hubayqah has visited a number of countries overseas. Most have expressed their desire to offer aid to solve this problem. However, they want to see clear plans for the refugee return project, because the subject could cause internal disagreements. There are also numerous suggestions for working to assure domestic self-funding for granting long-term loans. For example, there is the proposal that the central bank force private banks to deposit their funds without

interest or to give low interest. The central bank would earmark the value of this interest for persons desiring to rebuild their homes.

Draft of Study

The working draft of the study defines motives and goals, defines displacement and displaced persons, and reviews the causes of the civil war and the reality and kinds of displacement. It examines the positions of political forces domestically, regionally, and internationally toward the displaced persons problem. It reviews the results of field studies that have detailed the numbers of displaced persons and their proportion in the general population.

The report includes a legal section dealing with legal problems arising from displacement. The solutions proposed by the study include the mechanism for a return after the security and political aspect is remedied. This mechanism would operate in stages because of the great differences in the condition of displaced persons in terms of areas, circumstances of displacement, physical and demographic facts, housing conditions, and the infrastructure—electricity, water, roads, telephone, schools, and sanitation—in the original areas from which the people were displaced.

The proposed housing policy involves granting loans to owners of real estate and loans for rebuilding or building low-cost housing for non-owners. Non-owners would be exempted from fees and taxes for a certain period, and the Rentals Law would be put into effect quickly.

As for development, the study proposes providing jobs through projects for agricultural, industrial, commercial, and service development, encouraging capital to invest, and establishing a new civil organization in some areas.

The study proposes two ways of funding: external and internal.

External funding would come through aid, government loans, private sector loans, and funding of a particular village or development project by expatriate Lebanese.

Internal funding would involve imposing taxes and fees by the state and establishing a financing policy by the displaced persons themselves and by other citizens, through encouraging investment in the original areas from which the people were displaced.

The study analyzes proposals for solutions in three columns: 1) the proposals themselves; 2) the time allotted for implementing the proposal; and 3) the proper agency for implementation.

Statistics on Displaced Persons

AL-SAFIR is publishing the results of the survey of statistics on displaced persons compiled by the Office of Displaced Persons. These figures are compared with the

study by the [Organization] for Social Revitalization and the one by the Internal Security Forces.

Beirut Province:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 616 families, or 1.22 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 3,638 families, or 10.19 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 3,947 families, or 9.05 percent.

Mount Lebanon Province: 1. B'abda District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 4,875 families, or 9.70 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 2,643 families, or 11.03 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 5,559 families, or 12.35 percent.

2. Al-Matn District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 781 families, or 1.55 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 4,560 families, or 19.04 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 8,951 families, or 20.53 percent.

3. Al-Shuf District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 13,572 families, or 27 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 3,900 families, or 16.29 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 8,382 families, or 19.23 percent.

4. 'Aliyah District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 6,982 families, or 13.89 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 2,091 families, or 8.73 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 7,802 families, or 17.89 percent.

5. Kasrawan District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 105 families, or 0.20 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 52 families, or 0.21 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 107 families, or 0.24 percent.

6. Jubayl District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 20 families, or 0.03 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 77 families, or 0.32 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 145 families, or 0.33 percent.

Thus, the total number of displaced persons in Mount Lebanon Province according to these statistics comes to:

- Statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 26,335 families, or 52.40 percent;
- Statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 13,326 families, or 55.66 percent;
- Statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 30,948 families, or 71 percent

North Lebanon Province: 1. Tripoli District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 48 families, or 0.09 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 891 families, or 3.72 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 1,343 families, or 3.08 percent.

2. Al-Kurah District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 1,127 families, or 2.24 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 125 families, or 0.52 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 131 families, or 0.30 percent.

3. Zgharta District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 225 families, or 0.44 percent.

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 25 families, or 0.10 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 109 families, or 0.25 percent.

4. Al-Batrun District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 2,243 families, or 4.46 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 243 families, or 1.01 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 288 families, or 0.66 percent.

5. 'Akkar District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 2,960 families, or 5.88 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 338 families, or 1.41 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 226 families, or 0.51 percent.

6. Bsharri District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 1,035 families, or 2.05 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 76 families, or 0.31 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 37 families, or 0.08 percent.

Thus, the total number of displaced families in North Lebanon Province is:

- According to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 7,641 families, or 15.20 percent;
- According to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 1,698 families, or 7.09 percent;
- According to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 2,135 families, or 4.89 percent.

South Lebanon Province: 1. Sidon District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 4,214 families, or 8.38 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 1,310 families, or 5.47 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 2,762 families, or 6.33 percent.

2. Al-Nabatiyah District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 826 families, or 1.64 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 409 families, or 1.70 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 948 families, or 2.17 percent.

3. Tyre District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 285 families, or 0.56 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 867 families, or 3.62 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 993 families, or 2.27 percent.

4. Bint Jubayl District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 47 families, or 0.09 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 1,157 families, or 4.83 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 1,934 families, or 4.43 percent.

5. Marj 'Uyun District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 21 families, or 0.04 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 970 families, or 4.05 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 2,343 families, or 5.32 percent.

6. Hasbayya District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 14 families, or 0.02 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 148 families, or 0.61 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 655 families, or 1.50 percent.

7. Jazzin District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 2,423 families, or 4.82 percent;

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 789 families, or 3.29 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 1,822 families, or 4.18 percent.

Thus, the total number of displaced families in South Lebanon Province is:

- Total of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 7,830 families, or 15.58 percent;
- Total of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 5,654 families, or 23.61 percent;
- Total of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 11,438 families, or 26.24 percent.

Al-Biqā' Province: 1. Zahlah District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 1,817 families, or 3.61 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 300 families, or 1.25 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 419 families, or 0.96 percent.

2. West al-Biqā' District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 1,769 families, or 3.51 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 153 families, or 0.63 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 317 families, or 8.72 percent.

3. Ba'labakk District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 3,500 families, or 6.96 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 469 families, or 1.95 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 239 families, or 0.54 percent.

4. Al-Hirmil District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 65 families, or 0.12 percent.

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 16 families, or 0.06 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 15 families, or 0.03 percent.

5. Rashayya District:

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 683 families, or 1.35 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 28 families, or 0.11 percent;
- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 81 families, or 0.18 percent.

Thus, the total number of displaced families in al-Biqā' Province is:

- According to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 7,834 families, or 15.58 percent;
- According to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 967 families, or 4.04 percent;

- Number of displaced families according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 1,071 families, or 2.45 percent.

Total Displaced Outside of Lebanon

- Number of displaced families outside Lebanon according to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 5 families, or 0.03 percent;
- Number of displaced families outside Lebanon according to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 8 families, or 0.03 percent;
- Number of displaced families [outside Lebanon] according to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 7 families, or 0.01 percent.

Grand Total of Displaced Families in Lebanon:

- According to statistics of the Organization for Social Revitalization: 50,256 families;
- According to statistics of the Internal Security Forces: 25,292 families;
- According to statistics of the Office of Displaced Persons: 49,546 families.

Displaced Families, by Province

Province	Number of Displaced Families According to Organization for Social Revitalization	Percentage	Number of Displaced Families According to Internal Security Forces	Percentage	Number of Displaced Families According to Office of Displaced Persons	Percentage
Beirut	616	1.22%	3,638	15.19%	3,947	9.05%
Mount Lebanon	26,335	52.40%	13,326	55.66%	30,948	71.1%
North Lebanon	7,641	15.20%	1,698	7.09%	2,135	4.89%
South Lebanon	7,830	15.58%	5,654	33.61%	11,438	26.24%
Al-Biqā'	7,834	15.58%	968	4.04%	1,071	2.45%
Displaced Persons Outside Lebanon			8	0.03%	7	0.01%
Total	50,256	100%	25,292	100%	49,546	100%

SUDAN

State Still Regulates Bread, Fuel Prices

92AF0702A London AL-HAYAH in Arabic
15 Apr 92 p 9

[Article by Salah 'Abd-al-Rahim]

[Text] Authorities in the State of Khartoum canceled the decision that they had recently made to free commercial bread prices, after prices shot up by between 60 and 100 percent in the wake of the lifting of fuel subsidies. The authorities retreated, and set new prices for commercial bread at half its recent price. Following his meeting with commercial bakery owners yesterday, the director of the Ministry of Finance and Trade in Khartoum, Muhammad al-Khalifah 'Uthman, said that the decision to free bread prices had been exploited in order to raise

prices greatly, which forced authorities to intervene to set them and review them periodically, depending on circumstances. The freeing of bread prices was considered the first of its kind since 1965, when prices remained set by government orders. The ministry also justified the decision by saying that bakery owners had not adhered to the conditions which were set for them, which included the use of unsubsidized local or imported flour, which led to a scarcity of bread. Several bakery owners said that the experiment of freeing commercial bread prices had not been given enough time to be evaluated. Recently, the minister of trade announced that the the government intended to lift bread subsidies next May.

On another subject, the Transitional National Assembly (Parliament) decided to promptly call the Sudanese minister of finance to account over the decision to lift

the diesel subsidy, which was recently made by the minister as part of the decision to lift subsidies from all fuels.

The assembly's deputy speaker, Muhammad al-Amin al-Basir, said that the minister would be questioned, because the decision to lift diesel subsidies was a major one that ought to have been made through a temporary law by the head of state after the budget had been approved, and that ought to have been submitted to the assembly for it to make a decision thereon. He added that lifting the diesel subsidy will have a great impact, especially on agricultural production, transport, and the shipping of basic commodities.

Al-Basir said that the questioning will also include a question about arrangements that the minister made to lessen the impact on citizens of lifting the diesel subsidy, which led to rising prices. He added that the minister is expected to answer questions after he returns from a trip he is currently making to London and Tunisia.

Moreover, the minister of industry, Dr. Taj al-Sirr Mustafa, said that lifting the subsidy from furnace oil is expected to have a negative impact on industry, especially since it had been highly subsidized. But he mentioned that electricity is still subsidized, which lessens the burden of rising industrial costs.

He said that factories would have to absorb the increased cost of furnace oil so that it would not be reflected in the form of an increase in commodity prices, because that would depress them and make them less competitive, especially those that are exported.

The government newspaper AL-SUDAN AL-HADITH has attacked the decision to lift fuel subsidies. The editor-in-chief said in an article in yesterday's issue that the decision would only lead to increased hardship for citizens. The newspaper hinted that it was expected that subsequent decisions would be made along those lines. It had disseminated a report that the government intended to cancel the price hikes on diesel; however, a responsible source in the office of the energy minister, in speaking to AL-HAYAH, denied this report.

Economy Affected by War Efforts in South

92AF0702B London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic
20 Apr 92 p 4

[Text] Nairobi—The Sudanese Armed Forces [SAF] retook several positions that had been under the control of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army [SPLA] under the leadership of Colonel John Garang. Even though Garang's movement says that it had evacuated the cities of Bor and Yirol before government forces arrived—and insists that this was part of the movement's military strategy, which is to withdraw from certain locations without a fight during the dry season, and then retake them in the fall—the Sudanese Government points out that its victories to date are, in themselves, an indication

that Garang's movement is retreating in the south, especially in Upper Nile State.

The government has launched a broad domestic media campaign to keep up with news of the battles in Southern Sudan. It also arranged a popular march on Thursday, 7 April through the "concerned" unions.

Even though the government made a big effort to encourage workers in government offices to participate in the march, giving them permission to be absent from work, as well as providing means of transportation to those participating in it, participation was limited. Some attributed that to the recent economic decisions that forced benzene prices to rise by almost 105 percent, and gasoline prices by close to 175 percent. This had an immediate impact on transportation of all kinds. In fact, in a few days, these increases devoured what remained of employees' and workers' salaries after heavy spending during the blessed 'Id al-Fitr [end of Ramadan holiday].

Many believe that the big military campaign in the south will cast a black shadow over people's economic lives, especially in view of the massive expenditures on the war and Sudan's foreign isolation, which will force the government to resort to further severe economic measures and the imposition of more taxes in various forms and under various names.

There is a second group that feels unhappy that, in the media, the government concentrates on portraying the war in the south as one between Muslims and Christians. This will mean more division and conflict among the Sudanese, in view of the fact that those on both sides who die in this war are, in the final analysis, Sudanese.

This group points out that the government always says that the operations going on in the south are an "effort led by the believers," in the SAF and People's Defense Forces [PDF]. Moreover, the media have been eager to say that they have restored the call to prayer [azan] to the liberated regions, after it had been "abolished upon the entry of rebel unbelievers [al-mutamaridin al-kufar] to these regions."

In any case, the worsening living and economic conditions have left a widespread state of negative feeling and indifference towards what is happening, and this is reflected in what some have described as "the government's failure to form public opinion hostile to Garang." These commentators indicate that perhaps the average Sudanese was more hostile to Garang three years ago.

As for the south, the war will have disastrous consequences, for southerners have begun to talk intensively about the need to secede as long as the war is one between the "Muslim north," and the "unbelieving south". Even though southerners in Khartoum say that they are generally not bothered by the military consequences, they are unhappy about the human consequences. They add, "Northerners generally do not care about the lives and souls of southern citizens" and that this campaign might strengthen the secessionist spirit.

Military men, for their part, are divided into two groups. The first one believes that because of the administrative consequences on the army's situation, (more pensioning off, in light of the increased role of the PDF, especially in the upper ranks) the rebels have still kept their military capabilities. This group adds that it is practically impossible to put a complete end to the rebel movement unless a decisive blow is struck. It will be difficult, unless neighboring countries, (Kenya, Uganda, Zaire) agree that the movement causes security problems for them, and that the Sudanese Government is a factor for stability for its neighbors. In this case, the movement could be choked, its activity paralyzed, and peace negotiations with it could be started.

As for the second group, it believes that the movement still has its military capabilities, but that in light of the armaments and huge quantities of supplies that the SAF have, it is impossible for it to retake the positions that it has lost to the government. This group expects that the movement will return to its pre-1985 situation, thus constantly upsetting or paralyzing life in the south, and creating a constant state of readiness within the SAF. This will have a negative impact on the economic situation as long as there is little relaxation in Sudan's relations with neighboring Arab states and Western states in general.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Bank Releases 1991 Census, Financial Estimates

92AE03524 *Dubayy AL-BAYAN in Arabic 10 Apr 92*
p 2

[Text] The United Arab Emirates Central Bank announced that the population of the United Arab Emirates [UAE] in 1991, according to Planning Ministry estimates, totaled 1,908,800 persons, giving the UAE, with a total area of 30,000 square miles, a population density of 64 persons per square mile.

An economic publication issued yesterday by the central bank, which covers different economic and financial developments in the state up to June 1991, states that the governments of the individual emirates contributed 12,909 billion Emirian dirhams to the federal government's budget for 1990. Other revenues totalled 2,342 billion dirhams, for a total revenue of 15,251 billion dirhams. The report states that current expenditures totalled 14,206 billion dirhams, and development expenditures totalled 188 million dirhams, for total expenditures of 14,394 billion dirhams.

The central bank added, in the context of its survey of a number of economic indicators in the state, that as of June 1991, its assets totalled 18,694 billion dirhams, its foreign currency and gold assets totalled 17,440 billion dirhams, the issuance of paper currency and coin totalled 5.38 billion dirhams, currency auctions totalled 12.73

billion dirhams, private domestic liquidity totalled 63.785 billion dirhams, and domestic liquidity totalled 78.112 billion dirhams.

The central bank stated that as of mid-June 1991, assets or liabilities of commercial banks in the state totalled 131.758 billion dirhams, foreign assets totalled 14.537 billion dirhams, foreign liabilities totalled 21.255 billion dirhams, residents' deposits totalled 69.326 billion dirhams, nonresidents' deposits totalled 1.191 billion dirhams, residents' credit totalled 57.958 billion dirhams, and nonresidents' credit totalled 8.166 billion dirhams.

The bank added that in 1990, crude oil exports from the state totalled approximately 54.5 billion dirhams, and gas exports totalled 4.5 billion dirhams. Non-oil exports and re-exports totalled 18.5 billion dirhams, and imports totalled 42.5 billion dirhams, for a trade balance surplus of 35 billion dirhams.

The central bank stated that the UAE joined the International Monetary Fund [IMF] in September 1972. Its share in the IMF totals 202.6 million special drawing rights [SDR].

It added that the dirham is linked to the SDR on the basis of one SDR per 4.7619 dirhams, plus or minus 7.25 percent. It stated that the intervention currency is the American dollar.

The central bank indicated that the UAE contributed to the SDR account in the IMF on 21 December 1978. The state's provisions totalled 38.7 million SDR. Its balances in dirhams totalled 35 percent of its share in June 1991. The reserve tranche position was 65 percent of its share last June, and additional transfer facilities totalled 3.2 million SDR units out of a total original commitment of 150 million SDR.

In its publication, the central bank deals with monetary and banking developments in the UAE, including: net foreign assets; domestic credit; the development of the dirham exchange rate; and the activity of the central bank and commercial banks, including the commercial banks' aggregate balance, net foreign assets, free reserves, the net commercial position, the money market, banking credit, deposits, and interest rates.

The publication also deals with foreign trade, including the balance of payments, non-oil exports, re-export trade, imports, and general finance, which includes the federal government's general financial accounts and the state's consolidated account.

The economic publication also includes a study on the UAE's foreign trade with the other Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] countries, foreign trade between the GCC countries, and specific factors related to demand for imports.

Competitive Prices Alleged To Improve Position

92AE0352B *Dubayy AL-BAYAN in Arabic* 16 Apr 92
p 3

[Article by 'Ali (Shahdur)]

[Text] 'Ubayd Ghanim al-(Mutaywa'i), the chairman of the board of directors of the Dubayy Maintenance Facility [jaddaf—hereafter called the facility], announced an increase in the dry-docking [inzal] and raising [tarfi] of ships in order to perform maintenance on them at the facility during the first quarter of 1992. During that period, 758 ships were dry-docked and raised (175 more than in the previous year). Dock 1 at the facility handled 622 of these ships and Dock 2 handled 136.

He stated that dry-docking and raising activity during the first quarter of 1991 totalled 583 ships, of which Dock 1 handled 482 and Dock 2 handled 101. He said that about 211 ships were dry-docked and raised in Dock 1 during the first quarter of 1992, compared to 148 ships in 1991, an estimated increase of 140 ships for the current year.

During the first quarter of 1992, about 136 ships received maintenance in Dock 2, compared to only 101 ships in the first quarter of 1991, an increase of 35 ships in 1992. He attributed this increase to: a rise in maritime commercial activity via Dubayy; the availability of international ship-maintenance capabilities at the facility; the competitive prices offered by the facility compared to similar docks in the Gulf region; the adoption of Dubayy by most well-known international ship-maintenance companies as a regional center in the Middle East; the facilities available in the emirate for communications, the loading and unloading of goods; and easy travel procedures.

He added that the new expansions being carried out at the facility (which amount to more than 20 percent of the facility's current area) will facilitate the absorption and preparation of more ships for maintenance operations, thus reducing the wait line of ships needing to be dry-docked and raised at the facility for maintenance operations (which sometimes totals 18 ships). He said that 247 ships were dry-docked and raised at Dock 1 and Dock 2 in March 1992 (211 at Dock 1 and 36 at Dock 2), compared to 185 ships in March 1991 (148 ships at Dock 1 and 37 ships at Dock 2).

Al-Mutaywa'i stated that activity at the facility has been increasing since January 1992. In January 1992, 260 ships were handled (209 at Dock 1 and 51 at Dock 2). In February 1992, 251 ships were handled (202 ships at Dock 1 and 49 at Dock 2). In March 1992, 247 ships were handled (211 at Dock 1 and 36 at Dock 2). The increase in activity during this period is attributed to: a rise in commercial activity in all economic sectors in Dubayy; an increase in shipping activity via Dubayy; and the fact that traders using wooden boats have been having maintenance performed on their ships to enable

them to meet the shipping needs of the countries in the region, the Indian subcontinent, Pakistan, and countries on the African coast.

Al-Mutaywa'i added that January and February 1991 also recorded an increase in activity compared with January and February 1991. In January 1992, 260 ships were handled (209 at Dock 1 and 51 at Dock 2), compared to 217 ships in January 1991 (180 at Dock 1 and 37 at Dock 2). In February 1992, 251 ships were handled (202 at Dock 1 and 49 at Dock 2), compared to 181 in February 1991 (154 at Dock 1 and 27 at Dock 2). He attributed this increase in activity to the stabilizing of conditions in the region and the presence of fleets of wooden boats requiring maintenance in preparation for the resurgence of shipping activity in the area to meet the regional markets' demand for goods imported through Dubayy in particular.

Al-Mutaywa'i expects that the facility will see an additional increase in activity at the end of April 1992 due to new developments in commercial relations between Dubayy and neighboring countries, and the availability of enormous, excellent capabilities that enable Dubayy to strengthen its international commercial position.

Al-Mutaywa'i stated that: March [1992] saw the dry-docking of 106 ships and the raising of 105 ships at Dock 1, and the dry-docking of 17 ships and the raising of 19 ships at Dock 1 [read: 2]; and March 1991 saw the dry-docking of 73 ships and the raising of 75 ships in Dock 1, and the dry-docking of 17 ships and the raising of 20 in Dock 2. He indicated that the increase in dry-docking and raising activity in March 1992 compared to March 1991 encompassed all docks.

In a related development, sources in the ship maintenance sector in Dubayy expect an increase in ship and tanker maintenance operations in Dubayy due to the increase in demand for companies in the emirate, because these companies are considered the best international companies, and they have the best expertise and specialized equipment in this area. The sources indicated that the demand for [ship-maintenance] companies located in Dubayy originates in different parts of the world, especially with respect to supertankers. [Tanker] maintenance operations during the past year passed the \$30 million mark.

Containers in Port Zayid Increase in 1st Quarter

92AE0352C *Dubayy AL-BAYAN in Arabic* 20 Apr 92
p 3

[Text] His Highness Shaykh Sa'id Bin-Zayid Al Nuhayyan, the chief of the Maritime Ports Agency, yesterday morning received in his office at Zayid Port U.S. Admiral Douglas G. Katz and the delegation accompanying him.

His highness presented the port's coat of arms to Katz and explained to him the developments that have

occurred at Zayid Port as a result of the continuous efforts that have been made

Admiral Katz expressed admiration for the developments and achievements witnessed by Zayid Port through the use of modern equipment, which has demonstrated handling speed comparable to that seen in major international ports

For his part, his highness gave a statement to the UAE News Agency in which he said that the new administration's policy on Zayid Port has begun to bear fruit and reap the desired results in port operations, the most recent of which is a 28-percent increase in general goods [handling] productivity during the first quarter of 1992, compared to the same period last year, and a record 201-percent increase in the number of rigid [namati] containers handled at the port in the first quarter of 1992 compared to the same period last year

The department's revenues also increased by 40 percent during the past four months (December 1991 and the first quarter of 1992) compared to August-November 1991

His Highness Shaykh Sa'id Bin-Zayid Al Nuhayyan expressed his pleasure with the ongoing success being achieved by port month after month, and the continuous responsiveness that the Port Services Marketing Department is encountering from businessmen, shipping lines, and port users

His highness said that the new national administration succeeded, at the outset of its tenure, in attracting shipping lines, including, for example, the (Uniglor) shipping line, which links the port with Far Eastern ports, and the Romanian Bon Voyage shipping line, which links the port with Romanian and Turkish ports. The administration has also made key gains in convincing shipping lines that use the port to increase their trips and to use the port as a regional distribution center

At the conclusion of his statement, his highness emphasized that the port's services, its excellent, flexible facilities, and the speed at which procedures are effected in it—all of these factors guarantee that the port will attract new shipping lines, and they are a strong incentive to increase direct trips to the port

REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

Heavy Water Use Threatens Water Table

924E03674 Sanaa AL-THAWRAH in Arabic 13 Apr 92 p. 5

[Article by 'Abdallah al-Sharafi: "Haphazard Groundwater Consumption Threatens Disaster"]

[Text] The groundwater that has been collecting deep inside the earth over thousands of years will be exhausted within a very short time because of increasing consumption. Someone not knowing the facts would not

believe the number of artesian wells located near the water reserves of the capital, Sanaa. The capital's water basin actually has nearly 10,000 wells. This hemorrhage is not limited to the capital, however, for groundwater supplies throughout the country could be wiped out.

Responsible officials monitoring the subject in Sa'dah Governorate say that the city and its environs have over 7,000 wells. They said the water reserve in this agriculturally important governorate is being continuously depleted, and that most of the wells could stop producing. As the water hemorrhage in most areas of Yemen continues, the tragedy is that no thought is being given to alternatives. There is no interest in building diversionary dams, in conserving, and in regulating consumption to confront the dangers implicit in this situation.

New cities are being built on the outskirts of the capital, and expansion continues inside the capital as well. In the face of such urban expansion, water consumption increases with very little awareness on the part of the public. Meanwhile, no one attempts to find new sources for Sanaa's water to deal with some surprise that responsible agencies might not have foreseen. This is not just a matter of the capital, it applies to all Yemen's [governorate] capitals. The reason for singling out Sanaa for discussion is that it is Yemen's capital, and its water consumption is greater than anywhere else because of population density and the drought that has lasted several years. The heavy rains to which we were accustomed to are no more. They have become rare, falling infrequently.

Vigilance is definitely needed in each of our country's issues, relying solely on hopes will be of absolutely no help. We have certainly benefitted from every experiment, from the promises, and from relying on certain slogans which we lived with during successive periods of the life of the glorious revolution [as published]. No one monitors the hemorrhage of water throughout the country to teach people to regulate consumption. Groundwater, represented in the streams that once existed throughout Yemen, has dried up because no one looks after or regulates its use. Everything that is done is done primitively.

Agencies concerned with this matter have to realize its importance and vital nature, with respect to urban and rural water alike, and pay close attention to it. The responsibility for managing and protecting water falls on a number of agencies: the cooperatives, the Rural Administration, and the Ministry of Water and Electricity. This is what I believe, I do not know where the agency concerned with water throughout the rural areas is.

Haphazard drilling and searching for water throughout the country is widespread and serious. Everyone does as he wishes, without inquiring at the responsible agencies, especially now that the first and foremost objective of the search for water is to raise qat [a chewable narcotic common amongst Yemenis], only qat.

Cabinet Condemns Terrorism After Embassy Attack*92AE0367C London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 23 Apr 92 p 3*

[Article by 'Abd-al-Rahman al-Haydari: "100,000-Riyal Bonus to Special Squad Men; Yemeni Cabinet Condemns Terrorism, Praises Operation Rescuing Saudi Ambassador"]

[Text] Sanaa—At its meeting yesterday, Yemen's cabinet confirmed that "It rejects terrorism, condemns it, and stands resolutely opposed to it in all methods and forms, at home and abroad."

The cabinet praised the efforts of the Ministry of Interior and Security, the cooperation among security agencies, the precise manner in which the plan to rescue the Saudi ambassador in Sanaa, Mr. 'Ali Muhaimmad al-Faqidi, was carried out, the arrest of the perpetrator, and his turnover to the concerned agencies to conduct the investigations needed before he is put on trial.

The cabinet adopted a number of measures related to reinforcing security of the embassies and those working in the Arab and foreign diplomatic services.

A Yemeni citizen named 'Abdallah Jamil al-Matari (age 25) is reported to have taken the Saudi ambassador in Sanaa hostage and demanded a \$1 million ransom. Al-Matari was imprisoned after security officers stormed the ambassador's office in an operation on Monday morning.

Details

Col. Mutahhar Ghalib al-Ghamish, minister of interior and security, shed additional light on how the Saudi ambassador was rescued. He told AL-HARIS [THE GUARDIAN] newspaper, which is published by the ministry's public relations department, that "The site of the ambassador's office in the embassy building, important locations inside, and entrances, exits, and windows were studied by men of the police and security special squad, who receive highly efficient training and specialize in difficult and dangerous missions. After studying every contingency, and selecting the best of them to ensure the life of the ambassador and embassy possessions, this special squad was able to make its way into the building, and from there to various locations related to securing the measures that would subsequently be carried out in the ambassador's office.

"After covering all the windows and entrances to protect the life of the ambassador and secure the embassy, two special squad members were able to trick al-Matari, by exploiting delivery of a breakfast meal as a cover to gain entry into the office, surprise him, and arrest him.

"While carrying out this mission, one of the special forces men grabbed al-Matari's hand intending to direct the weapon towards the ground to protect the ambassador. A shot was actually fired to the ground, striking al-Matari in the foot, whereupon his movement was totally paralyzed.

"As the special forces men were grabbing al-Matari, the rest of the special squad was surrounding the ambassador to protect him against any unforeseen eventuality. It turned out that the briefcase in al-Matari's possession contained an assortment of locks and an iron chain.

"Immediately after the operation succeeded, the political leadership rewarded the security officers who carried out the operation, and each was given 100,000 [Yemeni] riyals in appreciation for his efforts."

Sons of Yemen Party To Publish Paper*92AE0367B London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 27 Apr 92 p 3*

[Unsigned article from Sanaa, no date: "RA'Y: New Yemeni Newspaper"]

[Text] The League of the Sons of Yemen Party [LSY, *rabitah al-abna' al-yemen*] (known by its acronym RA'Y) announced yesterday that beginning tomorrow, Tuesday, it will publish a newspaper speaking in Sanaa bearing the name RA'Y [OPINION]. The newspaper will join the nearly 100 publications now being printed in the country.

LSY is considered one of the most prominent parties on the Yemeni scene. It was the first to convene its general congress after unity was declared. The party, which is headed by Mr. 'Abd-al-Rahman al-Jafri, and whose secretary general is Mr. Muhsin Abu-Bakr Bin-Farid, held its congress last February.

In a statement announcing that it would soon be appearing, the new newspaper's editor-in-chief, Mr. Muhammad Jassar, said, "I have the honor of confirming for you that the line to be adopted by the newspaper grows out of our firm belief that its mission at this stage is to deepen national unity and develop common denominators and a harmonious outlook among the many frameworks for pluralistic political action, and to deepen the base of the democratic experiment."

NEPAL

Prospect of Economic Growth Seen Bleak

92AS0989E Kathmandu *THE RISING NEPAL*
in English 7 May 92 p 4

[Article by Hari Uprety: "South Asian Reform: Will It Pay?"]

[Text] An Asian Development Bank (ADB) report states that in the years of booming Asian economies, South Asia will not be able to gain much. In fact, the bank has forecasted a gloomy outlook for the region for the next few years.

Bleak Prospects

Inflation will be making headway over all other concerns. The whole region had an inflation rate of 13.2 per cent for 1991. For 1992, the forecast is put at 9.4 and for 1993, 8.3 per cent. Inflation will clearly be overtaking growth by leaps and bounds in the coming years. Consumers complaining about price rises will be having more coming their way.

Growth, on the other hand, has been forecasted to be low for the region. The Nepalese economy registered a four per cent rate of growth in 1991. In 1992 it is expected to go further down to 3.5 per cent and will come back again to four per cent in 1993. This is if everything goes well as planned. Until 1993, the country will be lagging far behind the five per cent growth as the Eighth Plans has promised to work for. And for Nepal to fulfill its planned objective of over five per cent, six and seven per cent growth will have to be required, especially in the second half of the plan period so that the average rate comes down to the required size.

There is much that has to be left for the regional economy to make both inflation and growth rate for the opposite directions until they meet. One cannot predict to much accuracy in the region's success or failure, for South Asia is perhaps in the most turbulent period in man-made history. Economic reform is the catchword in all the countries of the region. The only difference among countries in the region is that if some have already begun the process, others are just beginning.

What are the impediments to the economies of the region? The ADB cites the Gulf crisis as one of the main reasons behind the drop in the performance level of the regional economy. There is a great truth in it because the economies that have the greatest influence in the region's average are India and Pakistan, both of whom have a sizeable income from workers abroad. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, too, send workers abroad. So the drop in the remittances will be a major factor determining the region's economic performance.

The giant economies of the region, especially India and Pakistan, have taken the reform path and these are the initial years when drastic measures will have to be taken,

sometimes reversing decades-old policies that have become the pivot of most activities. Market forces during such times are supposed to swerve away from normalcy before they come to terms with reality and take a firm grip on the lives of the people and events. It is, therefore, not unnatural for inflation to soar without other economic variables undergoing a proportionate change.

The initial drive for competitiveness will no doubt make the countries resort to importing technologies, resulting in a gap in the balance of payments, leading to budgetary deficits which are one of the major reasons of inflation. Financial liberalization and handing over the distribution system to the market forces are all painful remedies to long-term ills. Both the Indian and Pakistani economies are going full-scale with such measures. Though the participation of foreign investors in bringing things to normalcy will not be a remote phenomenon when the new policies bear fruit, the initial years of ADB forecast will no doubt be proved right.

Both countries are also major exporters of primary commodities and the level of their exports must have considerably been hit by the slowdown of economic activities that has plagued the entire industrial world.

ADB's brighter forecasts are for the South East Asian region which is also the competitor for this part of the world which has to take up the same path to industrialization. The countries of the region have a slightly different functioning economies. Most of them have already undertaken the reform path and are on their way to reaping the benefits while South Asia has just begun. Those countries have already reached the level where South Asia still has to work hard to be.

South East Asia is already in the position to export technology-intensive commodities to the world market. And because it was ahead in bringing in reforms, it will clearly be having a lead over this region in any economic activity. The comparative advantage for South Asia will be the attraction of low cost production for foreign investors who are always on the lookout for cost-cutting methods. It is for this region's benefit if it embarks on finding out those areas where it can benefit from, despite South-East Asia.

Following the South-East Asian path for prosperity may not help South Asia because their advantage is in technology-intensive production and this form of production will always lead the economy towards better technology. There is a competition among the countries of that region itself in trying to find the best technology. On the other hand, a beginner like South Asia will have to do with lesser technology, which cannot be used to compete in the world market. Better technology to take part in the South-East Asian competition will be beyond South Asian means.

One way out will be to allow only the best technology through foreign investors and appropriate regulations. But technology is too dynamic a phenomenon to be left

at the hands of regulators who are not the best when it comes to responding to sensitivities of the market. And it is regulations that the South Asian economies are trying to fight.

Another factor working against this assumption is that foreign investors would not come to a region that demands the costliest technology and does not provide the necessary infrastructure needed. Further, the cost of production among various countries may differ but when it comes to producing with the most sophisticated technology, there is hardly any difference among countries. And if there is any benefit of technology-intensive production in one country over the other, it will be in the developed part rather than in the developing one.

Developing countries may be places for low-cost production but not when the best of technology is used. Infrastructure needed for such production will either have to be imported to sustain the industries or hastily produced at home at a high cost.

So when liberalization is being done for future growth, there is hardly any choice for an economy among factors of production. It has to depend a lot on outside factors, like foreign investors, and those that are beyond their reach. They may be able to put down barriers that hinder foreign investors' participation but have little to show them on how to produce and what.

Foreign investors are not only attracted by the low cost of production in a country. Other factors, like political uncertainty that prevails in a developing nation, more than offset it. A large enough market and open enough regulations will be more attractive to any investor than the cost of production which is always subject to change for the worse. Even if they are successful in ushering in investors, they will be finding that, in fact, foreigners who are attracted to their economies will not be because of the low cost of production but because of the market they themselves make. If the reforming countries thought that they would be more outward-looking by bringing import barriers down they will find that they are helping investors from other countries to be outward-looking.

Deeper in the Mire

The amount that will come into the country from abroad through investment will appear meagre in relation to the repatriation of profits that follows. From a commodity importing country, the economy turns out to be a capital exporting one, in the long run. Such economies will, no doubt, form a part of the world economy but will increasingly find that they will be in the giving end rather than in the receiving one, when it comes to finding out who prospers on whose account.

PAKISTAN

Minister Denies Interest in Muslim Bloc, Bomb

924S0846A London AL-MAJALLAH in Arabic
8 Apr 92 p 18

[Interview with Pakistani Information Minister Abdus Sattar Lalika, place and date not given]

[Text] The ministers of information of Islamic countries recently concluded a conference in Cairo. AL-MAJALLAH held an interview with Pakistani Minister of Information Abdus Sattar Lalika, who belongs to a politically influential family. He began his political career when he was elected to the parliament in 1985, before he became a minister in September 1991.

[AL-MAJALLAH] Pakistan being a state lying in Central Asia, which is witnessing historic and dramatic changes, such as the disappearance of the Soviet Union, do you see the possibility of an Islamic bloc being established in this region?

[Lalika] First, before we think about the establishment of a bloc we must solve the Muslims' problems. Let's take the Palestinian people's problem as an example. When we look around, we see that the peoples of Central Europe have been liberated and so have the Soviet republics. But so far, the Afghan people, unfortunately for the Muslims, are still suffering and so are the Palestinian people and the people in the Kashmir region, which is divided between India and Pakistan. Therefore, we believe in the need for these problems to be resolved before we think about blocs.

[AL-MAJALLAH] How do you view a solution for Kashmir problem?

[Lalika] The problem of Kashmir is not as complicated as India projects it. Everybody, including the United Nations, agrees on giving the right of self-determination to the Kashmiri people. If this right is granted, then the problem will be solved. The issue is that repression and persecution cannot last for long. This is a tangible fact in all the world.

[AL-MAJALLAH] Concluding his visit to Pakistan, U.S. Senator Larry Pressler expressed U.S. fears of the emergence of a fundamentalist Islamic bloc in Central Asia enjoying a nuclear option, in view of what is being said about Pakistan's efforts to develop this weapon. What is your comment on this?

[Lalika] I do not understand why Senator Pressler makes such statements. But within the bounds of Pakistan's concerns, we are anxious to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, and not for the purpose of destruction. Everybody knows that we lack energy resources. If the others have a right to do so, why can't we, too, do the same? We in Pakistan are ready to commit ourselves to all the guarantees required in this regard, but not in isolation from the area. Everybody knows that India, a

neighboring country, has actually carried out a nuclear detonation test. We have endorsed the principle of keeping the area free of nuclear weapons, but on the condition that the same should apply to India. I would reiterate that we, as an independent, sovereign state, have a right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

[AL-MAJALLAH] In October 1990, the U.S. Government suspended all military and economic aid to Pakistan. This has adversely affected the armed forces, particularly the air force. Do you not believe that such a step on the part of a state by whom you are considered a strong ally is an indication of the seriousness of the U.S. accusations in this regard?

[Lalika] If the United States harbors fears about Pakistan developing a nuclear weapon and an Islamic bloc emerging in the area, then we are prepared to discuss this issue with it and to explain matters. But the fact is that we have no intentions in this regard, and I believe that this misunderstanding will vanish with time.

[AL-MAJALLAH] But do you not think that, in a world that does not commit itself to a just defense policy, it is the Islamic world's right to possess a minimal nuclear deterrent option?

[Lalika] In my personal opinion, the world is changing, since the era of repression by using nuclear weapons has ended. Let's take the Soviet Union as an example. It used to possess all the means of strength, including nuclear weapons, and yet the union collapsed. I believe that the issue now lies in justice. If you are just with the peoples, then you are strong, and vice versa.

[AL-MAJALLAH] Western fears are being expressed in this regard, the fear of the creation of an Islamic bloc including Pakistan and the Muslim Soviet republics. What is your answer to this?

[Lalika] Really, I do not know why the West fears all this. As I have already said, the matter lies in giving justice to the peoples. This will be the source of power. I do not think that peoples of the area will gain much from such blocs. Let us take the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as an example. I believe it has hastened the downfall of the Soviet Union.

[AL-MAJALLAH] The talk about the Afghanistan problem leads us to talk about the question of the Mujahidin. It has eased recently. Why?

[Lalika] We are trying to coordinate between the Afghan Mujahidin groups in order to reach a peaceful solution to the problem, so that they will have an elected government there.

[AL-MAJALLAH] So there is no change in your attitude toward Afghan Mojahedin.

[Lalika] Of course, we have stopped supplying them with arms, but we are trying to unite them. The issue now is

that the situation has changed. As we know, Afghan President Najibullah is ready to reach a peaceful solution.

Journalist Regrets Closure of MORNING NEWS 92AS0987C Karachi DAWN in English 27 Apr 92 p 8

[Article by S.G.M. Budruddin: "A Newspaper Quietly Passes Into History"]

[Text] In just 100 days, MORNING NEWS should have been celebrating its 50th birth anniversary. But on Thursday, April 23, it suddenly ceased to exist. It may be difficult to accept the fact, but the newspaper which valiantly made and recorded history over a period of half of century, has quietly passed into history.

For one who remained involved with this newspaper for the best 20 years of his life, the event comes as a tragedy. For those working for it over the years, it is a disaster. For many others also, its final disappearance would be a national loss, because in one way or the other, right from its inception to its closure, the history of MORNING NEWS has remained intertwined with our national history.

In 1942, when the first issue of MORNING NEWS came out in Calcutta on August 1, its avowed purpose was to project the Muslim cause which was evolving into the Pakistan movement. In his first editorial, "A Bold Venture," its founder editor, Mr Abdur Rahman Siddiqui, had explained that the launching of the newspaper had become necessary to give an effective voice to the Muslim point of view, which did not find adequate space in the English language newspapers at the time.

That is how MORNING NEWS laid its claim to be the "voice of the nation." When it came out, it became the first English language morning daily newspaper to be brought out owned and edited by Muslims. Though lacking better production facilities, it acquired extensive circulation among the Muslims in eastern India because of its identification with the All-India Muslim League and the Pakistan movement. It enjoyed a unique position till the coming out of DAWN from Delhi in 1945.

Both Khawaja Nooruddin and Mr Abdur Rahman Siddiqui who were responsible for the founding of MORNING NEWS, were deeply committed to the cause of the Muslims of the subcontinent and to Pakistan. Both were pioneers in their fields and were endowed with courage and determination, they accepted challenging tasks and performed them with remarkable success. When one comes to think of it, one feels sorry that we do not remember them as much as we should for their great contribution to important spheres of national life.

Much before he assumed the editorship of MORNING NEWS, Mr Siddiqui was a prominent figure in Calcutta and a leading light of the Muslim League. During his illustrious political career, he was elected to the then Central Assembly in Delhi and remained a member of

the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League and a close associate of the quaid-i-Azam. Subsequently, he also became the Governor of East Bengal.

Mr Siddiqui was also closely associated with the Muslim business community in Bengal and was among the organisers of the Bengal Muslim Chamber of Commerce. He was also the founder of the Eastern Federal Union Insurance Company.

A section of the old Khwaja family of Dhaka, Khwaja Nooruddin could be said to have Muslim League in his blood. Despite its changing fortunes, Khawaja Nooruddin remained a strong supporter of the League, which was formed in 1906 at Dhaka in a meeting of the Muslim leaders of the time, hosted by Khawaja Salimullah, then Nawab of Dhaka.

In addition to political work in pre-independence Bengal, Khawaja Nooruddin's efforts to organise sports for the Muslim youngmen resulted in the setting up of the Calcutta Mohammadan Sporting Club, of which he was the general secretary. The club, which attracted skillful players from many parts of the subcontinent including Sindh, Balochistan and NWFP [North-West Frontier Province], built a powerful, almost invincible, football team whose encounters and victories against formidable British and other Indian teams evoked unprecedented enthusiasm. Even much later, when someone told Mr Nooruddin that his team had started winning the battle for Pakistan on the football fields of Calcutta, he felt visibly moved and elated.

However, MORNING NEWS remained Khwaja Sahib's enduring passion. After the partition of Bengal and the establishment of Pakistan, the continued existence of MORNING NEWS in Calcutta became precarious and also irrelevant. Khwaja Nooruddin who had moved to his ancestral hometown Dhaka, brought out MORNING NEWS from the capital of the new province of East Bengal, first as a weekly and then as a daily newspaper.

In Dhaka, Syed Mohsin Ali took charge of the newspaper as its editor. He had joined the editorial staff of MORNING NEWS during the editorship of Mr A.R. Siddiqui. Later Mr Siddiqui gave up the editorship and after an interregnum, Syed Mohsin Ali became the editor in Calcutta. This new phase was not without difficulties for the newspaper. The changeover from the developed metropolis of Calcutta to the undeveloped township of Dhaka, had its own concomitants. Then, political differences, conflict of group interests and factional rivalries, which had remained submerged during the Pakistan movement, began surfacing in the new province affecting its politics and economy, and their fallout reaching the newspaper.

MORNING NEWS continued to struggle and, as it now appears in retrospect, Mr Nooruddin kept on with his endeavour to strengthen its base and to make it a more effective exponent of what he considered as the true concept of Pakistan. Within four years of its existence in Dhaka, a bold decision that Mr Nooruddin took about

MORNING NEWS was to bring out an edition from Karachi. An analysis of the factors that motivated him may need a detailed narration. But one factor can be mentioned. Mr Nooruddin thought that by appearing simultaneously in Dhaka and Karachi, MORNING NEWS would be providing a useful vehicle for political communication between East and West Pakistan.

MORNING NEWS came out from Karachi in 1953, first as a weekly on November 19, then as a daily on August 14. A nucleus office was set up in 1952 during a visit of Mr Nooruddin to Karachi. Later, he moved to Karachi to settle down here and some time before the newspaper came out, Syed Mohsin Ali also came to Karachi and remained the editor of both the editions from Karachi.

An event which brought a basic change for the newspaper, was its acquisition by the National Press Trust. It was, perhaps, the persuasive skill of the two leading members of then Ayub cabinet—Mr Ghulam Faruque and the late Mr Mohammad Shoaib—that convinced Khwaja Nooruddin to hand over the newspaper to the NPT [National Press Trust]. Simultaneously, the consent of Adamjees was also obtained for the transfer. Adamjees held the majority shares in the owner company, though they did not actively participate in the running of the newspaper.

MORNING NEWS had a good period for itself beginning from the middle 1960s when new printing machinery and equipment were acquired for Dhaka and Karachi. The Dhaka edition especially built up a sizeable circulation and substantial revenue. In fact, it became and remained the top English language newspaper in East Pakistan until the events in 1971 changed the entire situation. MORNING NEWS achieved this position as much because of a liberal editorial policy that it could follow, despite the NPT ownership, as the healthier journalistic environment in East Pakistan.

A serious setback to MORNING NEWS came during the political agitation in 1969 when a frenzied mob attacked and ransacked its offices and the offices of its sister Bangala daily newspaper, DAINIK PAKISTAN, and burnt the machinery, equipment, stored newsprint and records of the two newspapers. It took considerable time for the restoration and rehabilitation work to be completed but it was done and as Mr Mohsin Ali said at the time, MORNING NEWS rose, renewed phoenix-like, from its ashes.

Then came the disastrous events of 1971. With the coming into being of Bangladesh, the situation changed fundamentally for MORNING NEWS. Its Dhaka establishment was taken over by the Bangladesh paper was deprived of the financial support that it received from the revenues of the Dhaka edition. The first PPP [Pakistan People Party] government did come to its help after the 1971 events but it is now being said that it is not an economically viable organisation.

Whatever might be the case, its final closure will be a shocking event particularly in view of the fact that in the

past, MORNING NEWS had shown a resilience against adverse factors and a capacity to survive through very disastrous and destructive developments. Why the same capacity for survival cannot be brought into action now remains to be explained. One, however, hopes that the powers that will take those factors into consideration, and also the fact that the newspaper which has many firsts to its credit, which has played a vital national role, and which has a remarkable history behind it, will not be allowed to become extinct. Certainly, ways can be found, as in the case of sick industries, for its restoration.

Before concluding, one thing needs to be specifically said. Whatever might be the future course of events for MORNING NEWS, its old issues, particularly of the Calcutta and Dhaka editions, stored in Karachi, need to be preserved as a part of the nation's historical records. If the NPT has funds to spare, they can be microfilmed. Or the bound volumes can be transferred to the Liaquat National Library or the Karachi University Library or any national institution. The NPT chairman, who has been associated with the information sector for a long time, will no doubt recognise the need.

Analyst Examines Nation's Adjustment to Democracy

92AS0987H Karachi DAWN Supplement in English
1 May 92 pp 1-2

[Article by Saeed Shafqat: "Transition to Democracy: What Is the True State of Affairs"; first paragraph DAWN comment; boldface words as published]

[Text] In the Third World, where a desire for democracy dominates, poverty, low literacy levels, elite cleavage, ethnic tensions and the feudal character of society continue to weaken democratic norms.

It was General Ziaul Haq's accidental death on August 17, 1988 that put Pakistan on a path to redemocratisation. After his death the military volunteered to withdraw from politics, and decided to hold elections and transfer power to the elected representatives of the people.

There are reports to the effect that Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), an integral component of the military, played an important role in unifying the political forces that were opposed to the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). Irrespective of these reports, there are political parties and interest groups who have not been comfortable with the PPP and identified themselves with the ideological legacy of General Ziaul Haq.

As a result, the Islami Jamhuri Ittehad (IJI) came into being. In the November 1988 elections, the IJI was routed in Sindh and marginalised in Balochistan, although it emerged as the dominant force in the Punjab and did well in the NWFP [North-West Frontier Province]. The PPP returned with a majority to the centre. It did exceedingly well in Sindh, especially in the rural areas. The elections brought to the forefront the political

and social groups which had been excluded from the political process for over a decade. Thus the 1988 elections paved the way for transition to democracy. The PPP assumed power at the centre, and Benazir Bhutto assumed the office of prime minister of the country on December 2, 1988.

During its 20-month rule, the PPP regime under Benazir Bhutto portrayed the image of a corrupt, inefficient, indecisive, policy deficient and administratively inexperienced regime. This image ultimately led to the removal of the regime and dissolution of the assemblies by the President on August 6, 1990.

A brief analysis of the PPP's regime (December 1988 to August 1990) reveals that, at the global level, the coalition under Benazir Bhutto continued to align itself with the U.S. It also secured the reentry of Pakistan into the British Commonwealth. In general, the world responded favourably towards the democratic transition in Pakistan. As a woman leader, she did earn global respect, but as a political leader, she failed to demonstrate political acumen and skills. In the regional context the Bhutto government took some bold initiatives in pursuing a policy of accommodation towards India. The recent exchange of letters between Pakistan and India not to strike each other's nuclear facilities emanated during the tenure of her government.

Internally, the regime was faced with a number of challenges. First, the IJI opposition had been consistent in criticising the government's policy of accommodation towards India. It propagated that Benazir Bhutto had accepted India's hegemony. It alleged that she had compromised Pakistan's national interests.

Secondly, the regime's performance in dealing with centre-province relations was inept to a large extent if not dismal. Both in constitutional and political terms the Bhutto government was unable to effectively deal with the issue. The attitude of the IJI opposition, spearheaded by Nawaz Sharif, was also not conducive to democratic transition, but the stalemate had to be resolved in the larger national interest. On the other hand, in Sindh, the ethnic issue continued to persist, there was a need to evolve a serious national dialogue on ways and means to promote reconciliation among the various warring communities.

Thirdly, the law and order situation continued to deteriorate, which suggested that government authority was weak and the PPP's struggle to establish this had proved insufficient. The primary concern of the government was to improve the law and order situation.

Fourthly, the PPP was caught between economic realities and political imperatives. Unemployment, inflation and paralysis of the industrial sector demanded immediate attention. However, the PPP government concentrated on the politics of patronage only. There were reports to the effect that large scale inductions were being made in the financial, administrative, and public sectors to accommodate PPP sympathisers. This led to

further inefficiency and sour feelings in these sectors. There grew a public perception that the PPP was perpetuating corruption, and not eliminating it. The PPP government failed to devise long term economic policies to give relief to the common man and to restore the confidence of commercial industrial groups.

Finally, the PPP as a party in government was faced with a serious predicament. On the one hand, it suffered from organisational weakness and ideological incoherence. As a result, factionalism started to brew in the party. Factionalism was on the increase because as a government, it was under tremendous pressure to accommodate interests and provide jobs to party affiliates, supporters and sympathisers. Hence, the PPP government began to dispense jobs and rewards to its supporters. On the other hand, bureaucracy was getting restive, under fears of revival of the lateral entry system and large scale induction of party affiliates in bureaucratic positions. Scepticism between the PPP government and the bureaucracy was on the rise. It must be recognised that bureaucracies take pride and thrive on the principles of merit, selection and promotion, while political parties invariably indulge in patronage. This is considered part of the political process in most of the democratic systems. However, in a Pakistani context, merit and patronage appear in conflict. The PPP needed to evolve a policy choice to co-opt bureaucracy, appease its institutional needs, and restore confidence in the party government as protector of its interests. In addition, the regime without mustering sufficient organisational strength and support, made futile attempts to weaken the military's hegemony. It presumed that power was transferred to civilian leadership while the military had conceded only to the sharing of power. This conflict of perceptions aggravated the nature of adversarial relations.

The IJI ruling coalition that assumed power has been the primary beneficiary of the Zia regime. The new generation of leadership that it has brought is groomed in the process of power sharing. Under ordinary circumstances they should have little difficulty in accepting the military's hegemony. However, as a consequence of war in the Persian Gulf, we are passing through unusual circumstances. Besides internal contradictions of the ruling coalition, divergent interests of opposing political parties, the spill-over effects of the Gulf War, pending settlement of the Afghan issue and uprising in Indian-held Kashmir are also causing tensions in the pattern of civil-military relations in Pakistan.

The obstacles to democracy in Pakistan can be summarised into the following factors:

Historical

Contemporary history and persistent military rule has undermined democratic values, norms and institutions that promote democracy, i.e., political parties, autonomous groups, a free and responsible Press.

Political

(a) Elite cleavage: lack of consensus among elites to promote democratic process.

(b) Weak political parties, dynastic-personality centric parties—which have either developed or grown as opposition movements to the government. Consequently, the political parties have a mobilisational character, but find it difficult to act as channels of interest representation. Most political parties are nondemocratic in their structure, character and outlook. There is no process for leadership selection; it's not elections but nomination through which party leaders are chosen within the political parties. Religious or ethnic parties are closed groups. In such groups, ideology or ethnic factor determines leadership selection process. Political parties have no links with policy-making process. It is not issues but personalities that matter.

(c) Since military rule has been persistent, a democratic government has remained an illusion. Political leaders have little experience of democratic rule. In the 1970s although Zulfikar Ali Bhutto assumed power through the electoral process and developed a constitution, he found it difficult to rule through democratic means. Even the Junejo and Benazir Bhutto governments, (and the current experience) revealed unfamiliarity with the democratic process. Almost no will was shown to uphold democratic norms and principles.

(d) Political leaders are not only inexperienced in democratic tradition, but also find it difficult to hold democratic values. Tolerance, compromise, bargain are absent, Vendetta and suppression of opponents is the norm rather than the exception.

Cultural

Is Islam hostile to democracy? The experience of Pakistan is that Islam has been used as an instrument of centralisation and social control by elites in power or otherwise. Consequently, the politics of Islamisation has promoted intolerance, rather than the politics of bargain and compromise with other groups. On the other hand, religious groups have become influential, quite disproportionately to the size of their real support base. The politics of Islamisation has given new life to various Islamic sects. Sectarian politics is undermining the spirit of Muslim brotherhood. It is promoting intolerance and weakening the politics of accommodation and consensus. Thereby Islamisation is hampering democratisation.

However, the biggest challenge to democratisation is the rising demands of ethnic groups. The demands of the ethnic groups for greater political participation, autonomy, and sharing of economic resources are causing tensions between the elites, who are well-entrenched in the power structure, and aspiring ethnic elites. Therefore, revival of religious sects and increased ethnic assertion have become a serious challenge for smooth transition to a democratic order.

Democratic Process

At this critical juncture of transition to democratic political order the crucial issue is not how to establish civilian supremacy but how to evolve a mechanism to share power with the military. The political leadership and political parties need to learn to share power before they can devise means to establish civilian supremacy.

It cannot be denied that cultural and structural constraints exist that make transition to a democratic order in Third World countries difficult. It needs to be recognised that reforming the culture of a society is like addressing the wrong question. There's a need to encourage the establishment about rules, procedures and laws under which democracy flourishes. Our approach has to be such that it's not merely the political culture of society that hampers or promotes the growth of democracy, but it is appropriate rules, judicious decisions and elite accommodation that facilitates the creation of a democratic order. Creation, acceptance and implementation of rules and laws that operationalise the principles of democracy need to be devised. It is through public education that democracy can be consolidated.

Political Education

There is a growing perception in Pakistani politics that political leaders' (who seek participation in the electoral process, or form political parties, contest elections and assume power) only objective is to interfere in the workings of bureaucracy, seek supremacy over the bureaucratic apparatus and procedure to advance personal interests or to ensure that their illegitimate tasks are accomplished. Public welfare is neither their goal nor intention. This suggests political leaders are in politics for the wrong reasons.

With such perceived objectives, political leaders and political parties cannot provide an alternative to the military's hegemony in politics. This image and attitude can be curbed only if mechanisms of accountability are stabilised and given legitimacy as part of the electoral process.

Assumption of power through electoral means does not mean unchecked and nonaccountable power. Accountability has to be nonpartisan. If, through accountability, it is only the opposition leadership that's harassed, it will also backfire and the political leaders would resort to all sorts of illegal methods to remain in power or join hands with those who are in power. This would make accountability a farce and an illegitimate process. Accountability from above and through the instruments of executive power or ordinances enhances military hegemony rather than strengthening the democratic process and political parties. **It is imperative therefore that rather than constituting special judicial tribunals, efforts be made to develop judicial instruments that have a popular mandate.**

The political parties in Pakistan need a large scale purging of their leadership. This purging does not have to come from any outside source (i.e., outside the party)

but from within. These decisions will have to be made by the leaders of the political parties and their supporters/members. If through the electoral process the members of a political party still decide to retain the dynastic character of their party or retain its descendent leadership, it is their choice. It should be noted that democratisation of a polity cannot occur without democratising political parties.

Reformed and democratised political parties are the best guarantee for a democratic order, its continuity and stability.

Commitment to the party and its programme need to be strengthened. Such political parties and a party system would provide an alternative to a military hegemonic system. Those political parties and political leaders who aim to ensure transfer of power from military hegemony to civilian ascendancy need to understand this. In a phase of transition towards democracy, they have to share power with the military. This power is imperative in the transition towards democratic order. It also provides the political leaders with an opportunity to consolidate the party system, encourage democratic norms, make dissent acceptable within the party and encourage consensus building, mitigate differences and develop interest aggregation within and among the political parties.

If the political parties fail to accomplish this task now, military hegemony will persist and the political leaders and political parties will have to remain content with functioning and operating under hegemonic conditions. Civilian supremacy of the political order will remain an illusion.

Transition to a democratic order from authoritarian rule needs to be accomplished in two stages. In the first stage, the political elite and parties need to develop consensus among themselves. They need to develop agreement on rules of succession and develop a mechanism through which smooth transition from military/authoritarian rule to democracy can occur. At this stage they need to agree that sharing power with the military is a desirable goal. The political elite and political parties need to politically educate the citizens as to why power sharing is imperative. At this stage, they need to emphasise partnership with the military.

In the second stage, the aim of the political elite and parties has to be to strengthen the political parties, develop participatory and democratic institutions, establish supremacy of law and demand transfer of power. Through the media, by formulating rules, leading to changes in the structure of political parties, by encouraging the process of elections within political parties, this strengthening can be done. Once the political elite and parties attain consensus building, minimise areas of conflict and confrontation, they can then impose checks on the political role of the military. Without strengthening political parties and developing a consensus on the nature and direction of the political process, they would

not be able to persuade the military to transfer power. Transition to democracy may occur through electoral process. However, consolidation of the democratic order will not occur, unless the suggested measures are adopted to strengthen the party system.

New Political Party Founded by Leftists

92AS0987G Karachi DAWN in English 1 May 92 p 6

[Article by Mahmood Zaman: "New United Left Party Formed"]

[Text] Lahore, April 30—A new social, democratic political organisation—Awami Jamhoori Party—was launched at a convention of delegates here on Thursday, with a modern and exploitation-free society as its goal.

The Awami Jamhoori Party came into being after some seven small left-wing parties and groups as well as some prominent political leaders, defecting from various political parties, announced their merger through a communique named the "Lahore Declaration." The merging parties included the Qaumi Mahaz-i-Azadi, the Pakistan Workers Party, the Pakistan Inqilabi Party of Dr Aizaz Nazir and different independent political groups in Sindh, the Punjab and the NWFP [North-West Frontier Province] calling themselves as the Qaumi Inqilabi Party.

The two-day convention, being attended by about 500 delegates from all the four provinces, also approved the new party's flag, the programme and the constitution. Awami Jamhoori Party elections were deferred by one year and an organising committee, headed by Mr Abid Hasan Minto, was set up to launch a membership drive for the coming year. It will be after the enrollment drive that the party will have its office bearers elected at all tiers—the primary unit, the district/city body, provincial organisation and the central leadership.

The convention began with slogans against imperialism, discrimination against women and minorities and "dogmatic behaviour of the ruling classes." The marriage hall, where the convention is taking place, was decorated with a large number of banners depicting demands that formed the basis of the new party's political and socioeconomic programme.

A presidium, including Abid Hasan Minto, Mairaj Mohammad Khan, Dr Aizaz Nazir, Chaudhry Fateh Mohammad (Punjab Kisan Committee), Sobho Gian Chandani, Dr Anis-ur-Rehman, Tariq Latif, Ehsan Wyne, Akhtar Hussain and Tahira Mazhar Ali Khan, was constituted to manage the convention.

At the outset, Mr Minto explained why a new party had become the need of the hour. He said the country was in the grip of a deep political and economic crisis and those advocating the status quo were adding to the miseries of the people. The ruling class had made the masses almost their subjects who were being denied their basic needs and rights.

He said the entire system needed a drastic change in order to bring about a true democratic order ensuring social justice and opportunities for all without discrimination of sex, creed, race and ethnic identity.

Introducing the party tricolour flag, Mr Mairaj Mohammad Khan said its vertical white portion on the pole side stood for peace; the green horizontal strip in the upper half depicted the party's desire to bring prosperity to the entire society and the red horizontal portion in the lower half stood for struggle to achieve the objectives.

"We stand by the downtrodden classes and express solidarity with peasants, industrial workers and other oppressed sections of society in their struggle for equal rights and due share in the national wealth," he added.

Programme: The party's programme was read out by Dr Aizaz Nazir. It was unanimously approved by the convention. Mr Akhtar Hussain presented the new party's constitution, which was also approved.

The Awami Jamhoori Party [AJP] affirmed its commitment to the federal parliamentary system of democracy and vowed to take part in elections. It voiced indignation over tempering with the Constitution and pleaded for its restoration as it stood when it was adopted. The party demanded repeal of the Eighth and subsequent amendments to the Constitution.

The salient features of the AJP programme are: mixed economy, healthy open market competition, decentralisation of power down to district level, complete provincial autonomy, unfettered fundamental rights, imposition of tax on agriculture, industrial growth with the help of modern technology, reduction of the defence budget, abolition of the feudal structure, ending of contract system of employment in industries and newspapers, free and compulsory primary and technical education, joint electorate for minorities, a non-aligned foreign policy with emphasis on close ties with neighbouring states, repeal of all laws discriminatory against women and only four subjects—defence, foreign affairs, currency and communication—with the Centre.

The new party's convention concludes on Friday. It also plans to hold a May Day rally.

PPP Alleges Party Workers Raped at Poll Booths

92AS0987F Karachi DAWN in English 1 May 92 p 3

[Text] Karachi, April 30—At least two Peoples Party women polling agents were gang-raped and another six were molested inside the polling stations during the by-election in Sanghar, PPP [Pakistan People's Party] leaders alleged at a Press conference here on Thursday.

Levelling these serious charges against Sindh Chief Minister Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah and his coalition partner, MQM [Muhajir Qaumi Movement], PPP Deputy Secretary General N.D. Khan and PPP Sindh

President Syed Qaim Ali Shah demanded suo moto proceedings against all those involved in these crimes against PPP women.

"The crime against women in the Sanghar by-elections had forced the Peoples Party to change its strategy and withdraw the unilateral support to Shah government," Mr Qaim Ali remarked.

"Our two women polling agents were gang-raped by the supporters of Jam Ashiq Ali, the third polling agent was stripped naked by 20 armed men, and the other three were molested in front of the police and law enforcement agencies," he alleged.

Asked if the Peoples Party would go to superior courts to seek justice, Mr Qaim Ali ruled this out saying "we have the example of Veena Hayat, the daughter of legendary Muslim Leaguer, Sardar Shaukat Hayat. If she could not get justice, how can you expect these dishonoured poor women to get any. We feel that suo moto inquiries should be held against all the persons involved in the crime."

Giving details of what had happened on the day of polling, the PPP leader said since early morning the members of the Hur force, clad in plain clothes and carrying official arms and ammunition, took over all the polling stations in the district. "Even I, and Shahnawaz Junejo who was the candidate, were not allowed to go to the polling stations," he added.

In the 24 polling stations in the Urban areas, the activists of MQM had thrown out all the polling agents after 11 a.m., saying that the agents were from Karachi. However, after the interference of the Election Commissioner, the polling agents were allowed to go in.

He said Syed Muzaffar Shah claimed to be a lawyer and had been saying that he believed in the politics of sanity, but in fact he was a "liar" and a continuation of the Jam legacy.

The Peoples Party, he said, had been demanding elections under the supervision of Army and the members of Pakistan Election Commission, but all our requests were turned down by the regime. "If the present government does not believe in adult franchise and one-man one-vote, the people of Sindh should be clearly told so," he added.

Mr N.D. Khan said an emergency meeting of PPP Central Executive Committee was being convened to review the party's strategy. "The Sanghar byelection is a clear signal to the Peoples Party," he said.

About the turnout, he said, according to the Election Commission the turnout was not more than 30 per cent, but when the results were announced, it had jumped to over 70 per cent, he said.

Had the Army been deployed to supervise the elections, the result could have been just the opposite, he said and

called upon the Chief Election Commissioner to declare the Sanghar elections null and void.

Analyst Calls For Division of Punjab Province

92AS0987E Karachi DAWN in English 4 May 92 p 7

[Article by Ayaz Amir: "The Compelling Case for a New Province"]

[Text] Dwelling on the higher aspects of tourism in THE NATION the other day, Mr Masood Hasan, that fine newspaper's star columnist, had this to say about my part of the world: "Nothing sensible or beneficial can be expected to emanate from the Potohar Plateau, except what plateaus are good for: flatness."

This is cultural imperialism at its most ignorant. If Mr Masood Hasan thinks the Potohar Plateau (a misnomer in any case but about which I will say a few words later) to be flat, what does he take the area around Lahore to be? Since childhood, we have had this belief drummed into our ears that "Lahore Lahore ai." It is time this piece of timeless wisdom was put to the test and exposed for being the provincialism that it is.

Lahore today is a city not fit for any sensible man or woman to live in. It is overcrowded, polluted and noisy. Around midday the traffic on the Mall, as even Lahoris are finally beginning to recognise, is so dense that it is only at a snail's pace and much loss of temper that one can make one's way along it.

Lahore may have been a great centre of the arts and of learning once upon a time but it is nothing of the kind any more. In its certified intellectual community, there are more fakes and pretentious dunces than in any comparable section of the people in the rest of the country. Another notable thing about Lahore is the fact that amidst the vast expanse of its noise and squalor, there are small pockets of divine privilege, like the Aitchison and Kinnaid colleges, which would be the first objects of popular wrath in any just dispensation. But the ordinary Lahori inured to differences of wealth and privilege, never questions these gave oddities. [sentence as published]

If you are unfortunate enough to engage in a discussion with your typical Lahori intellectual, you will either get a load of conspiracy theories (of which, for some reason, there always seem to be more in Lahore than in other places) or you will be told about the latest restaurant that has opened in Gulberg and the fabulous food that is served there.

To people living in northern Punjab, it makes no sense to have the provincial capital in Lahore. With the major roads being in the shape that they are, and with the railways on the verge of closing down, Lahore has not been brought closer to the rest of the province, it has been pushed further away. A road journey from Pindi to Lahore along Sher Shah Suri's Grand Trunk road is today an unrelieved horror. The only worthwhile link

between Pindi and Lahore is by air—convenient for the citizens of the two cities, especially those who can afford the air passage, but not so much for someone living in Pind Dadan Khan or Talagang. Nor are matters going to be helped by Mian Nawaz Sharif's motorway. It might cut the travelling time between the two cities but it will bring other disasters in its wake. If this six-lane monstrosity is ever completed (I hope it never is) it will cut a path of ecological and environmental destruction through what Mr Masood Hasan chooses to call the Potohar Plateau.

The natural centre of gravity of northern Punjab is Rawalpindi. At a time when the machinery of government, for want of repair and maintenance, is slowly grinding to a halt, to keep Punjab's northern belt tied to Lahore is reversing the natural order of things—almost like turning a river from its natural course. It is time, therefore, for serious thought to be given to breaking up this behemoth of a province and creating a Seraiki province in the south and a province of the Salt Range in the north. In between, the people of the Punjab plains, especially the citizens of Lahore, can keep the delights of balti gosht (Lahore's one distinctive contribution to modern civilisation) and the collected thoughts of Chaudry Ghulam Hyder Wyne for their exclusive enjoyment.

In any event, a fallacy perpetuated by God knows which British cartographer needs to be corrected. By the Potohar Plateau Mr Masood Hasan clearly means the entire stretch of territory from Jhelum in the east to the Khairabad bridge on the Indus in the west. But he is wrong. This region, bounded on the north by the Tarbela and Murree hills and on the south by the Salt Range, is divided into distinct geographical entities each with its own name.

Around Attock, the area is called the Chach. Beyond that to the east is Ghebi with Pindigheb in its centre. A girdle of 84 villages around Chakwal is Dhan, a land famous for its spotted black and white cattle (and, I may add, its upright men). To the south of Chakwal as the ground rises towards the first hills of the Salt Range we enter Wanhar. East of Wanhar lies Kahoon with Choa Saidan Shah as its most important town. Due east of Chakwal is Lundi Patti, well known for its sharp and cunning people of whom General Majeed Malik, the federal minister, who belongs to this area, is an apt symbol. Potohar,

strictly speaking, is the area made up of the tehsils of Pindi, Gujar Khan and Kahuta.

Far from being flat, this region, straddling the top of the Punjab plains is more spectacular and more full of scenic wonders than a townsman of the plains, brainwashed from childhood into thinking that Lahore is the centre of the universe, can be expected to know. Hills and ravines crisscross the rolling countryside, hills giving way to valleys and valleys opening into broad spaces. In winter the air is sharper and more clean than, I dare say, in any other part of Punjab. In autumn and early spring there is a blue haze hanging from the sky which lends romance to distant objects.

There are places along the foothills of the Himalayas and in Hazara Division which are undoubtedly more beautiful. The beauty of the Salt Range is of a quieter kind. There are no violent contrasts, neither snow-capped peaks nor precipices which plunge into the centre of the earth. One thing merges into another softly, and, most of the time, imperceptibly. The splendid beauty of the Murree or the Hazara hills is laid out on a different scale altogether.

But it is the great misfortune of these hills that they have become the great crossroads of Pakistani civilisation. As such their beauty has been trampled upon. What is left of Murree today? Very soon the privileged class, will be visiting it only for the sake of the Pearl Continental in Bhurban. Nathia Gali, once an idyllic place, is scarred by the summer cottage of the urban rich (may their lot perish). The discarded litter of modern mountaineering is despoiling even the highest Himalayan mountains. The Cholistan desert has virtually been handed over to the Gulf sheikhdoms (about which the less said the better). The stretch of territory between the Salt Range and the high mountains to the north is the last unspoiled frontier of Pakistan—off the beaten track and still free of that verminous breed which has done so much to pollute the globe, the modern tourist. Long may it remain that way.

Things will change if Mian Nawaz Sharif's monstrous motorway, its very planning a nightmare come true, is allowed to bring its destruction to the virgin purity of this region. But God is merciful. Between now and this project's completion, who knows what might happen—from the uncovering of a fresh scandal that might derail the work altogether to a thunderbolt from heaven that spreads confusion and mayhem among the men behind this ruinous enterprise. It is in the hope of such divine intervention that I live these days.

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